



FIBROKNOWLEDGE

MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT FIBROMYALGIA

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MYTH: FIBROMYALGIA IS RARE

FACT: Fibromyalgia is one of the most common types of chronic pain. It affects over 5 million patients in the United States alone.

MYTH: FIBROMYALGIA IS “ALL IN THE HEAD”

FACT: Fibromyalgia has been described for centuries. But it wasn't until 1981 that the first scientific study formally confirmed fibromyalgia symptoms and tender points in the body.

Since then, researchers have further tested pain reactions in people with fibromyalgia. Imaging studies show that the brains of people with fibromyalgia have more activity in reaction to pain. Studies also have shown that people with fibromyalgia feel pain more intensely at lower levels than people without the condition.

Fibromyalgia is thought to be the result of overactive nerves that cause chronic widespread muscle pain. Although, fibromyalgia is not just “in the head,” it is important to understand that the condition is stressful—especially when it goes undiagnosed. Stress can also make fibromyalgia worse.

MYTH: DOCTORS DIAGNOSE FIBROMYALGIA WHEN THEY CAN'T FIND A “REAL” DIAGNOSIS

FACT: It's true that diagnosis of fibromyalgia often takes time. There is no specific lab test for it. Your doctor can't see it on an x-ray or do a blood test to confirm it. Instead, he or she relies on your symptoms and a physical exam. What's more, the symptoms can overlap with symptoms of several other conditions. These other conditions must be tested for as well.

But fibromyalgia is very much a real condition. In 1990, the American College of Rheumatology developed guidelines for diagnosing fibromyalgia. Today, these guidelines are widely applied.

What's more, there are now thousands of studies validating this form of chronic widespread pain. In 1990, there were only about 200 published studies on fibromyalgia. Today there are more than 4,000 published fibromyalgia studies.

MYTH: FIBROMYALGIA IS A “WOMAN'S DISEASE”

FACT: The majority of people with fibromyalgia are women (about 80%). But, remember that fibromyalgia is a common condition. That means many men are diagnosed as well.

Studies have found that women with fibromyalgia do tend to have a lower pain tolerance and more symptoms than men. Both genders, however, responded similarly to fibromyalgia treatment as well as other nondrug treatments such as exercise.

Fibromyalgia is also seen in all age groups, from teenagers to older people. But the symptoms more typically begin in a person's 30s. Fibromyalgia occurs around the globe. And it appears in all ethnic groups and cultures.

MYTH: THE PAIN OF FIBROMYALGIA IS MILD

FACT: Some people only experience mild symptoms, especially when they are being properly treated. For others, the pain can be severe. It can have a significant impact on quality of life. Simple things they once took for granted, like working, going for a walk, household chores, and taking care of their families can become difficult. Symptoms also often get worse under stress or even under certain weather conditions.

MYTH: THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN BE DONE TO TREAT FIBROMYALGIA

FACT: Although fibromyalgia cannot be cured, for many people a diagnosis can be a great relief. It can mark the beginning of a new journey toward relief of some symptoms. Many people with fibromyalgia are able to reduce their symptoms through lifestyle changes and prescription treatments. Once, there was no FDA-approved treatment for fibromyalgia. Medications now exist to help relieve the unique pain of this condition.

Speak to your doctor to learn more.

MORE INFORMATION ABOUT FIBROMYALGIA AND CHRONIC WIDESPREAD PAIN CAN BE FOUND AT FIBROCENTER.COM