

Pain Service

Fibromyalgia

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition that affects the muscles, tendons and ligaments (bands of tissue that connect bone to bone). This can result in fatigue, widespread and extreme sensitivity to pain.

Fibromyalgia is known as a syndrome because it is a collection of symptoms rather than a specific disease process. The symptoms of fibromyalgia can vary from person to person and other than pain and fatigue symptoms may often include:

- Non-refreshing sleep
- waking up tired and stiff
- headaches ranging from ordinary types to migraine
- irritable bowel
- frequent diarrhoea or constipation, sometimes accompanied by gas in the abdomen or nausea
- cognitive disturbances including lack of concentration and word mix-up
- clumsiness and dizziness
- sensitivity to changes in the weather and to noise, bright lights, smoke and other environmental factors
- allergies

The symptoms can come and go over time. Sometimes long periods of time without any symptoms are possible. However, it is unlikely that they will ever permanently disappear altogether.

Fibromyalgia used to be known as fibrositis, which literally means inflammation of the muscles and soft tissue. The condition was renamed fibromyalgia after studies found that there is no inflammation or nerve injury.

Fibromyalgia is not life-threatening and does not reduce life expectancy. Learning to manage the condition is the most successful way of dealing with fibromyalgia. A combination of warmth, rest, exercise and reducing tensions can enable people with fibromyalgia to maintain a productive life.

What causes fibromyalgia?

The actual cause of fibromyalgia has not yet been identified. Fibromyalgia often develops after some sort of trauma that seems to act as a trigger. This could be a fall, car accident, a viral infection, childbirth, an operation or an emotional event. Sometimes however, the condition begins without any obvious triggering event.

Fibromyalgia is not new, but for most of the last century it was difficult to diagnose because the condition cannot be identified using standard laboratory tests or x-rays. In 1990 an international committee published requirements for the diagnosis of Fibromyalgia that are now widely accepted. These are:

Relevant patient's history and two main symptoms:

1. Widespread pain for more than three months together with
2. Pain in at least 11 out of 18 specific tender point sites when they are pressed.

"Widespread pain" means pain above and below the waist and on both sides of the body. The "tender points", or spots of extreme tenderness, are rarely noticed by the patient until they are pressed.

What is the treatment for fibromyalgia?

At the present time treatment for fibromyalgia aims to manage pain and fatigue and improve sleep. Sometimes medications can help. The best way to cope with fibromyalgia is to use a number of techniques that ease symptoms as much as possible.

Relaxation is one technique that works really well for almost everybody with fibromyalgia. It reduces tension in the mind and body right away. The results are calming for all of the symptoms especially for the pain.

Pacing your activities, regularly stretching and doing light exercise are other beneficial techniques. All these techniques will be discussed with you by the nurses within the Pain Clinic.

Psychological therapies can also be helpful to enable some people to cope with this condition and to take an active part in their own treatment.

Other sources of information and support

There are several websites on the internet which may provide useful information and support. Below are just a few.

www.fibromyalgia-associationuk.org

www.fibroaction.org

www.fmnetnews.com

www.menwithfibro.org

www.fibropals.co.uk

Addenbrooke's is not responsible for and does not endorse any of the content within these websites.



We are currently working towards a smoke free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Polish

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem Informacji Pacjenta (Patient Information) pod numerem telefonu: 01223 216032 lub pod adresem patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Portuguese

Se precisar desta informação noutra língua, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio, por favor peça ao departamento que contacte a secção de Informação aos Doentes (Patient Information) pelo telefone 01223 216032 ou através do e-mail patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Arabic

إذا كنت تود الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، بالأحرف الكبيرة أو بشكل شريط صوتي، يمكنك أن تطلب من القسم الاتصال بمعلومات المريض على الرقم: 01223216032 أو عبر البريد الإلكتروني: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Cantonese

如您需以另一語言版本、特大字體或錄音形式索取本資料，請要求部門聯絡病人諮詢服務：電話 01223 216032，電郵地址 patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Turkish

Eğer bu bilgileri başka bir dilde veya büyük baskılı veya sesli olarak isterseniz, lütfen bulunduğunuz bölümdeki görevlilere söyleyin Hasta Bilgilendirme servisini arasinlar: 01223 216032 veya patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر زبان میں، بڑے الفاظ میں یا آڈیو طریقہ سے درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس شعبہ سے پیشینٹ انفارمیشن سے ذیل کے ذریعہ رابطہ کرنے کی درخواست کریں: 01223 216032 یا patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk

Bengali

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও রেকর্ডিং পেতে চান তাহলে 'প্যাশেন্ট ইনফরমেশান' এর সঙ্গে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করে বা patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য ডিপার্টমেন্টটিতে অনুরোধ জানান।

Document history

Authors	Pain Service
Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
Contact number	01223 216993
Publish/Review date	June 2010/June 2013 (minor amendment made September 2011)
File name	Fibromyalgia
Version number/Ref	1/PIN2613