



HEALTH INFORMATION

Fibromyalgia

What is Fibromyalgia?

Also called Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS), Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition causing widespread pain affecting the whole body.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of Fibromyalgia may vary from person to person but the most common symptom is widespread pain. People may also have:

- Sensitivity to pain
- Fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- Muscle stiffness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Problems with memory, attention and concentration (also known as "fibro-fog")
- Headaches
- Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) – a digestive condition that causes stomach pain and bloating
- Other symptoms such as anxiety and depression

Who is affected?

Anyone can develop Fibromyalgia, although it affects around seven times as many women as men. The condition typically develops between the ages of 30 and 50, but can occur in people of any age, including children and the elderly.

What causes Fibromyalgia?

The exact cause is unknown, but it's thought to be related to abnormal levels of certain chemicals in the brain and changes in the way the central nervous system (brain, spinal cord and nerves) processes pain messages carried around the body.

In many cases, the condition appears to be triggered by a physically or emotionally stressful event, such as:

- An injury or infection
- Giving birth
- Having an operation
- The breakdown of a relationship
- The death of a loved one

How is Fibromyalgia treated?

There is currently no cure for Fibromyalgia, but there are treatments to help relieve some of the symptoms and make the condition easier to live with.

Treatment tends to be a combination of:

- Medication – such as antidepressants and painkillers
- Talking therapies – such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and counselling
- Lifestyle changes – such as exercise programmes and relaxation techniques
- Exercise in particular has been found to have a number of important benefits for people with Fibromyalgia, including helping to reduce pain

Support groups

Many people with Fibromyalgia find that support groups provide an important network where they can talk to others living with the condition.

Fibromyalgia Action UK is a charity that offers information and support to people with Fibromyalgia. If you have any questions about Fibromyalgia, call the charity's helpline on 0844 887 2444.

The charity also has a network of local support groups you may find helpful and an online community, where you can find out about news, events and ongoing research into the condition.

Another support group is UK Fibromyalgia.

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