Fibromyalgia

Fact-checked by Eva Kosek, Senior Lecturer

Fibromyalgia is frequently a life-long disease that primarily affects women. The symptom of the disease is pervasive pain, but abnormal fatigue, sleep disturbances and intestinal problems are also common.

Heat and stretching reduce the pain, whereas cold and stress exacerbate it.

Who gets it
Nine out of ten people who get fibromyalgia are women. The disease often appears in middle age but it can appear in the younger years.

The cause of the disease is largely unknown. Studies have shown that people with fibromyalgia have changes in their muscular tissue and increased pain activation in their central nervous system.

The disease is often associated with excessive psychological stress. These factors combined are believed to trigger the start of the disease.

Symptoms
The basic symptom is an enduring pain and tenderness in the body. The pain is present during rest and movement. Some sufferers are in so much pain that even wearing tight clothing is hard for them.

It is typical for the disease that the pain arises in different places in the body on different days and at different times during the day. The intensity of the pain also varies from day to day. It is often situated in the muscles, though some sufferers also experience pain in the joints. In addition to pain in the body’s soft tissues (muscles, connective tissue, fatty tissue, etc.) other symptoms arise as well. Many sufferers experience extreme fatigue that cannot be relieved with rest.

Treatment
The treatment involves finding, for each individual, ways to cope with the disease and lessen the pain. ‘Patient pain-management courses’, where patients learn to cope with their disease, are often helpful.

Physical activity is everything in treating fibromyalgia. At first, commencing a programme of physical activity can increase one’s pain, so any such programme has to be introduced gradually. Exercising in warm water can have beneficial effects. Many sufferers may need help to deal with their stress and set boundaries for themselves and others in their social milieu.

There has also been considerable development recently in terms of effective drug therapies.

With the right treatment and understanding from the person’s immediate circle, most sufferers can retain much of the life they had before the disease. It is important to learn to manage the disease and try to live a normal life, as far as possible.

Did you know...

Research confirms that physical activity can lessen pain and sleep problems.

Knowledge of one’s own disease is an important part of learning to manage it. Patient pain-management courses are a good way to obtain help with that.

Less severe forms of fibromyalgia can resolve spontaneously. As many as 20 per cent of fibromyalgia patients can be free of their disease within two years.
The Swedish Rheumatism Association
A knowledge-based organisation

Over a million people in Sweden have a rheumatic disease. The disease also affects those close to the sufferer. Our mission is to ensure that as many people as possible who are touched by rheumatic disease can lead a normal, meaningful life.

The Swedish Rheumatism Association is a knowledge organisation that strengthens the individual and consistently advocates for people suffering from rheumatic disease and other diseases in the organs of movement. We are a source of knowledge for our members, the public, politicians and the media. No other organisation has greater knowledge about what it’s like to live with rheumatic disease.

As a member, you receive six issues of our members’ magazine, Reumatikervärlden (in Swedish), widely recognized for its high quality. Our website contains a wealth of literature on diagnoses, research and current issues in our association. You can also interact with other members of the arthritis community through our members’ blog.

Join the Swedish Rheumatism Association. We look forward to meeting you!

Call 08-505 805 00, or register on our website, www.reumatikerforbundet.org

Address:
Swedish Rheumatism Association
Box 12851  112 98 Stockholm, Sweden
Visit the Association at: Alströmergatan 39
Tel. No.: 08-505 805 00
Email: info@reumatikerforbundet.org
Website: www.reumatikerforbundet.org

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”For people living with arthritis, by people living with arthritis”

To order information material (primarily in Swedish) or promotional items, visit the Arthritis Shop at www.reumashop.se, Tel. No. 073-7890556. Assistive devices can also be purchased there.

Support research through the Swedish Rheumatism Association

Make your donation on the website of the Swedish Rheumatism Association, https://reumatikerforbundet.org/ or deposit it in Plusgiro Account No. 90 03 19-5, or Bankgiro Account No. 900-3195

Thank you!