

Fibromyalgia Support Brochure

* Facts

* Information

* Support



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ALWAYS

Believe in yourself and what you are feeling—both emotionally and physically. No one can tell you that what you are experiencing is not real! Fibromyalgia is a chronic medical disorder just like diabetes, hypertension, and asthma. While there are still gaps in our understanding of the disorder—and disagreements among researchers as to its specific causes—the symptoms are very real, and a patient’s suffering is legitimate.



NEVER

Feel guilt for your illness. Fibromyalgia isn’t something you wished for, and it isn’t something you can wish away. Healthcare providers have had trouble accepting FM as a bona fide medical condition because of the lack of readily available blood tests or X-rays that show there is something wrong with a fibromyalgia patient’s body. However, research studies have revealed problems in such areas as the chemical content of the spinal fluid, the manner in which certain endocrine glands and the autonomic system respond to stress, in brain



function, and in patient performance during tests of cognitive and physical function. FM is not a psychiatric condition or a character flaw.

FIBROMYALGIA

Can wax and wane, so on the days that are extra-challenging, remember that it will get better. Fibromyalgia involves much more than just pain. In fact, surveys of patients have suggested that fatigue may be just as problematic. Other leading symptoms that are associated with the disorder include sleep disturbances, stiffness, and problems with concentration and memory. While many clinicians associate fibromyalgia with depression, it appears that anxiety-related issues may be more prominent. Appropriate therapies can help keep flares under control, and good self-management techniques can help improve your overall health and reduce pain.

FIBROMYALGIA

“Affects” many more people than it “afflicts.” Everyone who knows someone with FM is affected. It is now estimated that more than 10 million Americans have fibromyalgia, and it is apparent that it is a global health issue. The majority of researchers studying fibromyalgia believe that it is primarily a disorder of the central nervous system. Although fibromyalgia has traditionally been considered a musculoskeletal condition, most findings now



point to a problem in that part of the nervous system that carries pain-related information to and from the brain. Debate continues as to the extent that problems in the muscle tissue or blood supply may contribute to the experience of pain.



FIBROMYALGIA

Can sometimes make you feel very alone. Keep in mind that over 10 million Americans have fibromyalgia and feel just like you do! Since the flow of information from the muscles and other tissues to the brain involves many different processes, it is possible that different types of problems may result in the development of chronic widespread pain and tenderness. An exciting area of research involves the determination of patient groups based on the circumstances in which their symptoms developed, the various symptoms they experience other than pain, and the degree to which they may have inherited certain genes that might predispose them to the development of pain. Insights on potential fibromyalgia sub-groups are anticipated to improve patient assessment and care.

IN ORDER

To find ways to improve your quality of life, it is important to find healthcare providers who want to partner with you along your journey. Some clinicians are more familiar with fibromyalgia and more comfortable with treating it-than others. Ideally, the relationship between a healthcare provider and a patient should be comfortable and based on mutual respect. When considering potential providers, patients should do some "homework." Do they have good reputations among professional colleagues, and do their patients speak well of them? Do they have a positive attitude toward fibromyalgia, and do they keep up with current insights on treatment options? Are they willing to make referrals to allied healthcare professionals (i.e. physical or occupational therapists, counselors, etc.) when appropriate?

EDUCATION

Is empowerment! Learn as much as you can about fibromyalgia and then put into practice what you have learned about making helpful lifestyle changes. Often simple remedies can have a big impact on health-and the more patients know, the more options are open to them. With new medications becoming available, it's even more important for patients to learn as much as possible. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted approval of

drugs specifically to treat fibromyalgia. While not effective for every patient, many patients who take these drugs experience significant benefit in terms of reduced pain and increased quality of life. There are also additional medications currently used to treat overlapping conditions that have shown real promise in alleviating patient symptoms. Most of these are available for prescription if your provider is comfortable prescribing "off-label."

DECISIONS

That you make while in terrible pain are usually terrible decisions. Never make rash decisions, especially when you are hurting! Finding a treatment strategy that works best for you will probably take time. Given the complexity of the causes of chronic widespread pain and the symptoms associated with it, it should come as no surprise that it may take time to find the correct combination of medications and other therapies that work best for you.

REMEMBER

To be good to yourself. Every day should include activities that make you happy. Don't forget to stop and smell the roses! Several factors that may aggravate symptoms can be self-managed if one is willing to be proactive. Patients can control their sleep hygiene, their motivation to exercise, and stress and lifestyle-management techniques. Attitude can play a large role in the success of these efforts.



Gentle Hugs!

Continued

EVERY DAY!!

We are making advances in the awareness, research, and treatment of fibromyalgia.

People, organizations, companies, and medical experts are all working to ensure a better future for people with fibromyalgia!

There is hope!

In the last 25 years, medical science has made tremendous strides in our understanding of the basic pathology of the disorder, and advances are rapidly being made in the manner in which fibromyalgia is treated.

Find more resources from these trusted organizations!

**American College of
Rheumatology**

2200 Lake Boulevard NE
Atlanta, GA 30319

404-633-3777

www.rheumatology.org

**National Institute
of Health**

9000 Rockville Pike,
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

301-496-4000

www.nih.gov

allsup

National Social Security
Disability Representatives

1-800-405-8339

www.allsup.com

Act For Life Services

1441 Broadway
6th Floor PMB #6135
New York, NY 10018-1905

(212) 532-6740

www.actforliveservices.org

“No Life Lived in Loneliness”

To find more information and to
help you find support please go to...

fmaware.org

24 Years Serving the FM Community



3857 Birch St. Ste 312
Newport Beach CA 92660

Mayo Clinic

13400 E. Shea Blvd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85259

480-301-8000

www.mayoclinic.org