

# Fibromyalgia

## What is fibromyalgia?

**Fibromyalgia** [fy-broh-my-AL-juh] is a chronic (long-term) condition that causes people to feel pain and tenderness in their muscles and bones. It is a condition that must be managed as opposed to being cured.

## What causes fibromyalgia?

Doctors don't know the exact cause of fibromyalgia, though it is thought to be due to abnormal pain processing within the brain. Some things may make the condition more likely, such as:

- Brain chemicals that are off balance
- A family history of the condition
- Stressful or traumatic events
- Repeated injuries
- Certain diseases

## What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of fibromyalgia include:

- Pain and tenderness throughout the body, especially in muscles or around joints
- Poor sleep and persistent fatigue (tiredness)
- Mood problems, like depression, anxiety, or stress
- Problems with thinking and memory
- Migraines or headaches
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Pelvic pain or bladder problems
- Jaw pain or popping



## How is fibromyalgia diagnosed?

Fibromyalgia is often diagnosed after doctors have ruled out other common causes of pain and fatigue. To help diagnose fibromyalgia, your healthcare provider will:

- **Get your medical history.**
- **Ask about your symptoms.**
- **Do a physical exam.** In particular, your healthcare provider will likely check how many areas on your body have recently had pain.

There are no simple tests, like x-rays or blood tests, that can detect fibromyalgia. However, your healthcare provider may order these tests to rule out other possible causes of your symptoms, like a thyroid condition or other joint problems.

## How is fibromyalgia treated?

Fibromyalgia may be treated with a combination of therapies. Some include medication and others do not.

### Non-medication therapies

Examples of fibromyalgia therapies that do not include medication are:

- **Exercise.** This is the most effective treatment for fibromyalgia. Low-impact aerobic activities (like walking or swimming), stretching exercises, yoga, and tai chi are great options. Exercise as often as possible and add more movement to daily activities, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator.
- **Complementary therapies.** These may include massage, acupuncture, or chiropractic treatments.
- **Psychotherapy.** This type of treatment involves talking with a mental health provider and learning how to better manage anxiety and stress. A provider can also help you learn other skills to manage fibromyalgia or reduce symptoms.
- **Sleep therapy.** A sleep medicine specialist may help patients that have sleep problems. You may also want to create regular sleep habits, such as going to bed at the same time each night. Avoid naps or drinking caffeinated drinks to reduce fatigue as they can interrupt sleep habits. Smoking or vaping can also worsen fibromyalgia sleep problems.

### Medication

Your healthcare provider may prescribe one or more medications for your condition, such as:

- **Fibromyalgia medication.** The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved several medications for the treatment of fibromyalgia. Duloxetine (Cymbalta), milnacipran (Savella), and pregabalin (Lyrica) are some examples of medications that may help block or reduce pain.
- **Antidepressants.** These medications may help balance certain brain chemicals and improve mood by treating depression, anxiety, or stress. They may also help a patient sleep better and have more energy.

### Questions for my doctor

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### My follow-up appointment

Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

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