



Tips for Managing Your Fibromyalgia at Home

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Home Remedies for Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition of fatigue and widespread pain, along with other symptoms that can vary from person to person.

The name fibromyalgia comes from "fibro" for fibrous tissues (such as tendons and ligaments) "my" indicating muscles, and "algia" meaning pain.

It can be a challenging and frustrating condition, sometimes taking years to get a diagnosis.

Common Symptoms

Besides the widespread pain and fatigue, there are many other symptoms that can be present. Personally, I have found these to fluctuate, depending on whether I am having a flare-up (a temporary increase in symptoms) or not. Here is a list of a few common ones:

- Gastrointestinal issues: this is what I call tummy issues, including gas, bloating, nausea, stomach pain and bowel pain. This also includes uncomfortably slow or fast food digestion.
- Insomnia or poor-quality sleep
- Hot spots of pain on the body, often known as tender points. These tend to be painful to touch.
- Headaches and migraines
- Flu-like feeling and constant aching
- Burning, prickling sensations all over the body
- Fatigue, often lasting for days, weeks and even months
- Sensory sensitivities: for example, sensitivity to bright lights, smells, sounds and increased pain upon touch.
- Increase in pain post-exercise
- Cognitive issues, such as short-term memory loss, brain fog, the inability to think straight or mixing up words in a conversation.
- Environmental sensitivities: food allergies, pollution, weather, temperature, etc.

Potential Causes

This is a tricky one to answer, as there is much debate and ambiguity in the medical community regarding what causes an onset of this condition. However, some theories suggest that this condition may be triggered by a one-off episode or prolonged episode of physical and/or mental stress, such as:

- Surgery
 - Illness (viral and other infections)
 - Trauma (both physical and emotional)
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- Stress

Diagnosis

First, your healthcare provider may use tests such as scans and blood tests to help rule out other possible causes for your symptoms, before a diagnosis of fibromyalgia is made.

There is still uncertainty surrounding the validity of tests available to accurately diagnose fibromyalgia. You can learn more about the diagnosis process here. However, there are some promising new research studies being done on diagnostic blood tests for fibromyalgia, and one biomarker test has actually been FDA compliant to help diagnose fibromyalgia since 2012. You can read more about this here.

Treatments

Your medical professionals may offer you medications and other therapies. You may also be recommended to try fibromyalgia treatment centers. Treatment will prioritize controlling pain and improving your quality of life. You may also be advised to practice different types of self-care you can do at home.

Suggested Home Remedies for Fibromyalgia

Home remedies for fibromyalgia can be an excellent way to manage your day-to-day symptoms and reduce the length and intensity of flare-ups.

However, these home remedies for fibromyalgia must be openly discussed with your medical professionals, prior to starting. I must emphasize that no medication should be stopped or reduced without prior agreement from your physician.

Home remedies can be split into two categories; ones you can undertake yourself and ones you will need a trained professional for.

Remedies to Try Yourself

Let us first go through the ones you can try yourself at home:

- Use of heat and cold: this includes hot tubs, hot and cold baths and showers, and hot and cold compresses. I find alternating between both temperatures to be great for reducing muscle pain and reducing pain in any trigger point areas.
- The use of meditation, deep breathing exercises and using positive affirmations. I have self-taught these using books, online courses and YouTube. Not only have I managed to reduce my stress levels and anxiety, but also how I react to my symptoms.
- Exercise such as tai chi, yoga, stretching, low impact interval training (LIIT) and walking. I find exercising challenging to undertake, and this is due to an increase in post exercise fatigue and pain. My advice is to start slow — even a few minutes a day, per week can help. I feel less stiff, with reduced muscle pain, and it improves my sleep and moods.
- Vitamins, minerals and supplements: it is well documented that some vitamin deficiencies can cause similar symptoms to fibromyalgia. For example, my vitamin D deficiency caused an increase in fatigue and muscle pain. However, you must always discuss with your doctors if you are planning to try any vitamins or supplements; some vitamins and supplements can react negatively with your medications or with each other (for example, SAMe and St. John's Wort).
- Diagnostic diet: some individuals develop sensitivities to certain foods. Cutting types of food from your diet for a period of time and monitoring your symptoms can be an effective way of finding out what foods impact how you feel.
- Music: there is no better feeling than listening to your favorite tracks. Maybe you could develop a playlist. Play this as often as you can to lift your mood and take your mind off any troubling symptoms. Maybe even have a dance.

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- Sleep hygiene and napping: develop a strict nighttime routine. For example, reduce your phone and television usage before bed, and do not consume alcohol, nicotine, food or drinks within two hours of going to bed. Also, keep your bedroom cool and try to fall asleep and wake up at a similar time every day.
 - Pacing: stretching out activities over multiple days, ensuring plenty of rest is undertaken in between tasks.
 - Aromatherapy: some essential oils have soothing properties and can be used in a diffuser or massaged onto the skin. However, please use with caution, as some oils can cause issues in children and animals.

Remedies to Try with a Qualified Professional

Now let us talk through some of the remedies you can obtain through qualified professionals, at home:

- Massage: I find massage helps me with my muscle pain, reduces my stiffness and is very relaxing.
- Acupuncture: some people believe this can help with stiffness, reduce pain levels and increase blood flow to certain areas.
- Therapies, such as hypnotherapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and counseling: these can teach you techniques and strategies to cope and deal with stressful situations.