

# MANAGING FIBROMYALGIA THROUGH DIET AND EXERCISE

In partnership with POTENTRx

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## What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain, accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory, and mood issues.

### Know Your Facts!

#### Q: What causes fibromyalgia?

A: Fibromyalgia symptoms can be triggered by illness or injury that cause trauma to the body, resulting in underlying, undetected physiological problem. Most researchers agree that fibromyalgia victims experience pain amplification because of abnormal pain processing in the central nervous system, but more research is needed.

#### Q: What are other symptoms/overlapping conditions?

A: Fibromyalgia may be accompanied by irritable bowel syndrome, migraines, restless leg syndrome, impaired memory and concentration, skin sensitivities and rashes, dry eyes and mouth, anxiety, depression, ringing in the ears, dizziness, vision problems, Raynaud's Syndrome, neurological symptoms, and impaired coordination.

#### Q: Is there a cure for fibromyalgia?

A: Unfortunately there is no cure for fibromyalgia currently, however, there are medications and lifestyle changes that can be made in order to alleviate or control the symptoms of fibromyalgia.

#### Q: Why is fibromyalgia more prevalent in women?

A: It is unclear why women are more prone to developing fibromyalgia, but gender-specific, physiological and hormonal differences seem to play a significant role. Pain is experienced differently in women and men. Female sex hormones like estrogen and progesterone influence the central nervous system, eliciting an altered perception of pain. More research is needed to fully understand the pathophysiology of fibromyalgia and why there is a drastic difference in the prevalence between women and men.

#### Q: Is there anything I can do to control my fibromyalgia from taking medication?

A: Yes! There are many modifiable risk factors that contribute to fibromyalgia. Please refer to the reverse side for lifestyle changes that can help to relieve the symptoms of fibromyalgia.

**Approximately 6-10% of people in the United States have fibromyalgia of which 75-90% are women.**

*Fmaware.org, 2014*



(Fibromyalgia tender points)



## What Can Lifestyle Changes Do For Fibromyalgia?

There are many effective lifestyle changes to manage the symptoms of fibromyalgia— the primary being exercise. Exercise can provide many benefits including a decrease in pain, tender points, and depression, as well as increase mental health. Aerobic exercise can also improve cardiovascular dysregulation (cardiovascular dysregulation can lead to hypersensitivity to pain). Other lifestyle changes that can be useful for managing fibromyalgia include stress reduction techniques such as meditation or breathing exercises. Practicing good sleep hygiene such as maintaining a regular sleep schedule, reducing exposure to light at least an hour before going to bed, and avoiding caffeine and alcohol before bed. In addition, eating a healthy diet is always recommended to improve bodily functions. You should eat more vegetables and fruits and reduce the amount of red meat consumed by switching to poultry or fish.



## Factors of Fibromyalgia

There is no one, definite cause of fibromyalgia, but the following are known to increase risk for fibromyalgia:

### Modifiable Risk Factors

None.

### Non-Modifiable Risk Factors

Family history of fibromyalgia, increasing age, gender (female), and history of rheumatic disease.

## What Can Exercise Do For Fibromyalgia?

Regular exercise can provide the most benefit for fibromyalgia symptoms. It is recommended that one performs aerobic exercise 2-3 times a week on nonconsecutive days. Exercise should be performed at 50% of your age predicted maximal heart rate, or at a self-selected exercise intensity (depending on your pain) for 30-60 minutes. One of the most attractive types of exercises for fibromyalgia victims is aquatic exercise. Water buoyancy, controlled temperature, and viscosity reduces the stress experienced by the body during exercise. Resistance training 2-3 days a week on nonconsecutive days has also been shown to reduce pain and tender points. In addition, tai chi has been shown to reduce pain among people with fibromyalgia. It is recommended to utilize a combination of different exercises to manage fibromyalgia symptoms.