

Southport Physiotherapy Centre

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Making Sense Of Fibromyalgia

“It was such a relief to know that I had something other people had and it wasn’t all in my head. But when he told me there was no cure and nobody knows how to treat it or even what causes it, I thought I’d die.”

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a chronic condition that is characterised by widespread pain and fatigue. It has been linked to arthritis, however, while many sufferers of arthritis may also suffer with fibromyalgia, FMS is different, in that it affects muscles, ligaments and tendons rather than joints.

Two other conditions associated with fibromyalgia are chronic fatigue syndrome and myofascial pain syndrome, with some experts believing that all three are variations of the same disorder.

Up to five percent of the Australian population may suffer from FMS, (mainly women between the ages of 30-50). However, since more men are reporting symptoms of the condition, the true figures are likely to be much higher.

Having the condition acknowledged (even though there is no cure yet available) can make a huge difference to a person suffering FMS.

“If you have lived with this, and the disbelief of people thinking you’re just lazy and manufacturing symptoms, it can be so disheartening. But having a definite diagnosis means that you can finally access information and start to learn some self-management strategies that can improve your life enormously”.

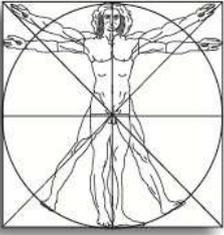
- Symptoms can be triggered by stress/trauma or infections.

The condition is not degenerative nor is it progressive, and it won’t kill you. The pain may never go away completely, but it won’t always be excruciating and there are strategies that enable sufferers to stay in control and ‘have a life’.

Because of the many varied symptoms and widespread nature of fibromyalgia, the methods of treatment need to be tailored to suit the needs of the individual.

Medication for pain relief and improved sleep may be recommended. Your doctor may also prescribe a low dose antidepressant.

Strategies to help with pain management include daily routines of meditation, breathing exercises and relaxation techniques.



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Water therapy often helps and may include warm baths or showers and low impact pool exercises (Hydrotherapy).

Stress management can include such gentle exercise programs as Tai Chi and yoga. Acupuncture also may provide relief.

Modification of diet and lifestyle also may help.

- There appears to be a reduced blood flow in the brain stems of people with FMS. It is not known yet if these changes are unique to fibromyalgia or if they are common to other causes of chronic pain. Since the area of the brain stem is not known to modulate pain or be affected by anxiety or depression, researchers think it's probably unique to FMS.