

# Fibromyalgia

## What is Fibromyalgia?

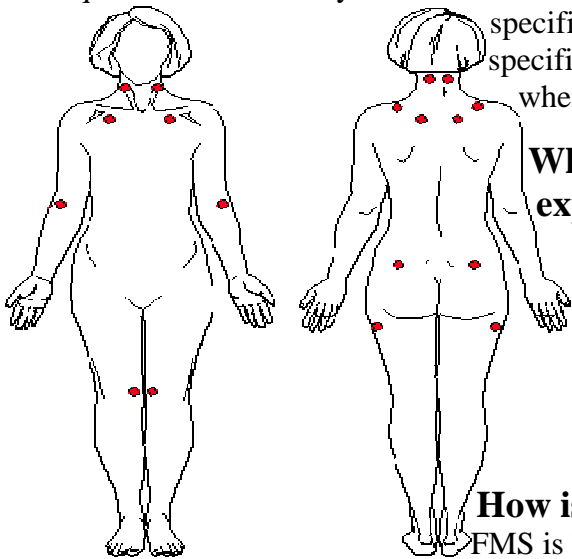
Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a widespread musculoskeletal pain and fatigue syndrome. Most common complaints include musculoskeletal aches, pain and stiffness, soft tissue tenderness, general fatigue and sleep disturbances. Although the cause is still unknown new research has shown that the FM patient has multiple physiological abnormalities compared with the normal population. Most researchers agree that the patient with FMS experiences pain amplification due to abnormal sensory processing in the central nervous system. Fibromyalgia has also been linked to stressful or traumatic events, repetitive injuries, illness and certain diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and ankylosing spondylitis.

## Who is affected?

It is estimated that FMS affects as many as 1 in 50 Americans. Most people affected with Fibromyalgia are women. The majority of people affected by Fibromyalgia are diagnosed during middle age.

## How is it diagnosed?

Currently there is no diagnostic test available for diagnosing FMS. Doctors must rely on the patient's history, reported aggravating signs and symptoms and a physical exam that includes an accurate manual tender point evaluation. Currently a positive diagnosis must include: widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body for a minimum of 3 months and tenderness and pain in at least 11 of the 18 specified tender points when pressure is applied. Tender points are specific places on the neck, shoulder, back, hips, arms, and legs that hurt when pressure is applied.



## What other symptoms might a person with fibromyalgia experience?

- Tingling and numbness in hands and feet
- Problems with thinking and memory
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Temporomandibular joint dysfunction syndrome
- Difficulty sleeping
- Headaches
- Morning stiffness
- Painful menstrual periods

## How is fibromyalgia treated?

FMS is hard to treat and often takes a team approach, which includes your doctor, physical therapist and possibly other health care providers. Since not a lot is known about fibromyalgia it is important to find health care professionals that are familiar with treating this disorder. Rheumatologists are often the doctor of choice since they specialize in arthritis and other conditions that affect the joints and soft tissues. Other treatments include pain management, sleep management, psychological support, therapeutic massage, myofascial release, aqua therapy, light aerobics, acupressure, heat/cold modalities, acupuncture, yoga, and relaxation exercises.

## What can you do to help relieve the pain and associated symptoms?

- Take medications as prescribed by your doctor
- Get enough sleep
- Exercise
- Eat a well-balanced diet
- Make work changes to reduce the stresses on your body