

# Fibromyalgia: Are We Getting Anywhere?

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# Fibromyalgia: Are We Getting Anywhere?

Chances are good that someone in your family or your circle of friends has fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia affects 10 million Americans, which is 2 percent to 4 percent of the population. It has become the 21st Century Disease.

Although the disorder has been around for thousands of years, a name was not designated for this miserable condition until 1976. Then in 1990, the American College of Rheumatology published a formal set of diagnostic criteria. Nevertheless, medical science still struggles to understand fibromyalgia and physicians continue to argue over whether or not it is a “real” disease.

The reason for all of this fibro-furor is its complexity. This report will provide you with a summary of what is known to date about this disease, from what causes it to what can be done about it.

**And yes, fibromyalgia is a disease in its own right.**

You used to hear that it was a “diagnosis of exclusion”—a diagnosis they would give you if they couldn’t find anything else wrong with you. Much more is known about this condition than was known 20 years ago, and it must be identified by its own characteristic features, not used as a trashcan term for “everything else.”



Diagnosing fibromyalgia is a challenge.

It affects many body systems, and the symptoms overlap many other conditions. Therefore, it will be helpful to identify a physician who is very familiar with the disorder. There are currently no laboratory tests available for diagnosing fibromyalgia, so physicians depend on patient histories, reported symptoms and clinical exam.

The National Fibromyalgia Association estimates that it takes an average of 5 years for a fibromyalgia patient to get an accurate diagnosis because so many physicians are not adequately educated about it. If your doctor seems to be brushing off your symptoms with, “It’s probably just fibromyalgia,” as if you are just bloated or something, it might be time to find a different doctor.

## Just What Is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal aches, pain and stiffness, soft tissue tenderness, general fatigue, and sleep disturbances.

The pain can be spread over any part of your body, but the most common sites tend to be your neck, back, shoulders, pelvic girdle, and hands. Patients tend to experience a wide variety of symptoms with varying intensities that wax and wane over time.<sup>1</sup>

Fibromyalgia seems to occur 8 to 10 times more prevalently in women than men, and is seen in children and all ethnic groups. Because of its debilitating nature, it has a serious impact on patients' families, friends, and employers, as well as on society as a whole.

## Classic Symptoms

- **Pain** – The key marker of fibromyalgia is pain, which is profound, widespread and chronic. It occupies most parts of your body, and it varies in intensity.

It has been described as deep muscular aching, stabbing, shooting, throbbing and twitching. Neurological complaints add to the discomfort such as numbness, tingling, and burning.

The severity of the pain and stiffness is often worse in the morning. Aggravating factors are cold/humid weather, non-restorative sleep, fatigue, excessive physical activity, physical inactivity, anxiety and stress.



- **Fatigue** – The fatigue of fibromyalgia is different from the fatigue that many people complain of in today's busy world. It is more than being tired—it is an all-encompassing exhaustion that interferes with even the simplest daily activities, often leaving the patient with a limited ability to function both mentally and physically for an extended period of time.
- **Sleep Disruption** – Many patients have an associated sleep problem that prevents them from getting deep, restful, restorative sleep. Medical researchers have documented specific and distinctive abnormalities in the Stage 4 deep sleep of fibromyalgia patients. During sleep, they are constantly interrupted by bursts of awake-like brain activity, limiting the amount of time they spend in deep sleep.
- **Other Symptoms** – Other symptoms can include irritable bowel and bladder, headaches and migraines, restless leg syndrome and periodic limb movements, impaired memory and concentration, skin sensitivities and rashes, dry eyes and mouth, anxiety, depression, ringing in your ears, dizziness, Raynaud's Syndrome, and impaired coordination.

In order for fibromyalgia to meet the diagnostic criteria of the American College of Rheumatology, it must meet two criteria:

1. Widespread pain in all four quadrants of your body for a minimum of three months
2. Tenderness or pain in at least 11 of the 18 specific tender points when pressure is applied (see diagram below)

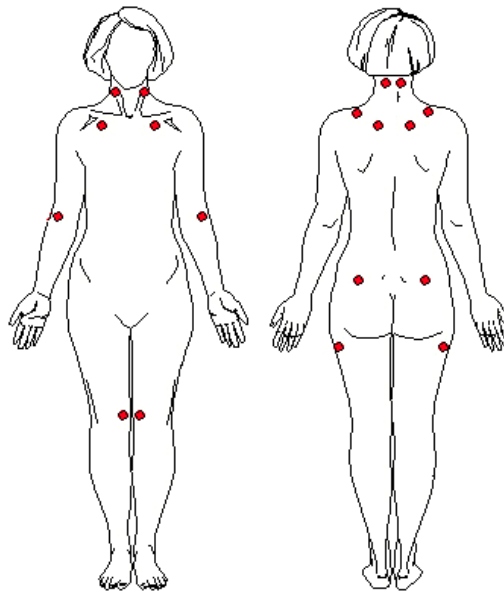


Illustration of Tender Points, from the American College of Rheumatology  
1990 Diagnostic Criteria for Fibromyalgia Syndrome

## What Causes Fibromyalgia?

This is the million-dollar question scientists have been wrestling with for decades. There have been nearly as many theories about causes of this mysterious disease as there have been people investigating it over the last 20 years.

There have been theories of viral infection including Epstein-Barr, fungal infection, bacterial infection including mycoplasma, heavy metal toxicity, nutritional deficiencies, growth hormone deficiency, emotional trauma, autoimmune disease, sleep dysfunction, and many other theories of etiology.

While the underlying cause or causes remain a mystery, new research is bringing us closer to understanding the basic mechanisms of fibromyalgia. The current thinking is that fibromyalgia is a disorder of central processing with neuroendocrine/-neurotransmitter dysregulation.<sup>1</sup>

In other words, if you have fibromyalgia you experience *pain amplification* due to abnormal sensory processing in your central nervous system.

If you have fibromyalgia you have a lower threshold for pain because of increased sensitivity to pain signals. Researchers believe repeated nerve stimulation causes the brains of people with fibromyalgia to increase the levels of certain chemicals that signal pain (neurotransmitters).

Additionally, your brain's pain receptors (neurons)—which receive signals from neurotransmitters—seem to develop a sort of “memory” of the pain and become more sensitive, meaning they overreact to pain signals.<sup>2</sup>

What happens then is that pressure applied to a spot on your body that typically wouldn't hurt someone *without* fibromyalgia, would be painful to you if you had it. What initiates this process of central sensitization is still not known.

Researchers have found physiological abnormalities in the **central nervous system** of those with fibromyalgia, including:<sup>3</sup>

- Increased substance P and other pain-related chemicals in the spinal fluid
- Low blood flow to the thalamus region of the brain
- Low function of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis (the HPA is a major part of the neuroendocrine system that regulates reactions to stress and many other body processes)
- Low levels of serotonin and tryptophan
- Elevated levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines (involved in cellular communication)
- Abnormal autonomic nervous system function
- The primary pain control system in the spinal cord does not filter out or dampen incoming noxious signals from peripheral tissues
- Documented impaired ability to concentrate
- Documented impaired ability to stay asleep



Research findings show that **peripheral tissues** are also involved in producing the symptoms of fibromyalgia:<sup>3</sup>

- Muscles are often tight and knotted with myofascial trigger points
- High levels of a nitric oxide-producing enzyme was documented by one research team to help explain why patients have exercise intolerance
- Excessive levels of oxidative chemicals that irritate tissues were found in connective tissues in the tiny spaces between muscle fibers
- Reduced blood flow to muscles and a reduced number of capillaries were confirmed by different research teams ... these findings were hypothesized to be caused by the malfunctioning autonomic nervous system

## But What's the Trigger?

Now we know what mechanisms are "out of whack" in fibromyalgia ... but why this happens is still anyone's guess. The current thinking is that some sort of *triggering event* happens to precipitate the onset of fibromyalgia.

Examples of triggering events are:

- ✓ Emotional trauma
- ✓ An infection
- ✓ An accident
- ✓ An illness
- ✓ Surgery
- ✓ The development of another disorder such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, or hypothyroidism

These triggering events do not *cause* fibromyalgia; rather, they might awaken an underlying physiological abnormality that is already present. The trigger just stresses your body to its “tipping point” where it responds pathologically.

*The trigger can be any type of significant stress.*

This is why some researchers have mistakenly thought they had found the “cause” of fibromyalgia when they have really only found a common trigger for developing the disease. The underlying cause remains to be seen.

## Treatment Has Typically Been Management of Symptoms

Even without fully understanding the cause of fibromyalgia, we have much more knowledge about treating the symptoms than we've ever had before.

As with most disease, the key to treatment lies in supporting your body's own abilities to heal itself through good nutrition, restorative sleep, moderate exercise, and lowering stress. The key to curing fibromyalgia is not a pill.<sup>4</sup>

No surprise there.

Over the years, medical science has tried many fibromyalgia patients on many different drugs using a “shot in the dark” approach, hoping something would stick. Nothing has.

Most drugs create more symptoms than they relieve. They end up helping the mega-billion dollar drug companies much more than patients.

## Your Diet is Key to the Solution

There is some evidence that people with fibromyalgia experience fewer symptoms if they eliminate one or more foods from their diet that are the most common triggers for food allergies.

In one study of 17 fibromyalgia patients, nearly half experienced a “significant reduction in pain” after eliminating corn, wheat, dairy, citrus and sugar.<sup>5</sup>



There is no one-size-fits-all recipe for diet, or for disease. The best option is to utilize my [Nutritional Typing](#) program to determine what nutritional type you are, so that you will know how your body reacts to food.

Nutritional Typing is not a diet. It is a way to determine which of three basic groups you fit into: Protein Type, Carb Type, or Mixed Type.

I have condensed my [nutrition plan](#) into an easy to follow eating plan that progresses in three stages, from beginning to intermediate to advanced. With this three-level approach, I've made it manageable.

I have found that following this eating plan seems to help most people with fibromyalgia. However, it is also clear from many years of practice that diet alone is *not the complete answer* to curing this disease.

Now that I have said there is no “one-size-fits-all” diet, I must list one caveat. If you have fibromyalgia, it is crucial to avoid artificial sweeteners. (All people should avoid artificial sweeteners, for that matter.)

Aspartame, in particular, has been known to trigger fibromyalgia-type symptoms, and if you have the disease already, it will only make it worse.<sup>6</sup> So if you have fibromyalgia and use artificial sweeteners, discontinue them immediately. They could be responsible for part or even all of your symptoms. You might want to read up on this in my book [Sweet Deception](#).



## Addressing Your Emotional Triggers

There is almost always an emotional component to fibromyalgia. This is based not only on what is in the literature but also on what I have personally witnessed in treating so many patients with this disorder.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC), which is relatively conservative in estimates such as these, states that 85 percent of *all diseases* have an emotional element, and the actual percentage is probably even higher.

An ongoing scientific research project is offering proof that childhood traumas are a major factor in all illnesses. It is called the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, and it's a collaborative effort between the CDC and Kaiser Permanente.<sup>7</sup> The largest study of its kind, the ACE study analyzes the relationship between multiple categories of childhood trauma, and health and behavioral outcomes later in life.

Specifically, ACE looks at the effects of recurrent physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, living with a substance abuser, having an incarcerated household member, living with a

depressed or suicidal family member, and other similarly emotionally traumatic situations.

The ACE study found a strong relationship between the number of childhood traumas and the number of health risk factors for leading causes of death in adults. In particular, they found a significant relationship between the number of childhood trauma exposures and the following disease conditions:<sup>8</sup>

- Ischemic heart disease
- Cancer
- Chronic bronchitis or emphysema
- History of hepatitis or jaundice
- Skeletal fractures
- Poor self-rated health



Even though they did not specifically mention fibromyalgia, it follows that a chronic condition such as this would likely fit into their model.

Emotional traumas can sabotage your health for years, but a study released in May, 2008<sup>9</sup> reveals exactly why this is. A research group has shown that the enzyme calcineurin and the gene regulation factor Zif268 decisively determine the intensity of emotional memories.

For the first time, this has enabled the regulatory processes at the synapse, which are important for emotional memories, to be linked to the processes in the cell nucleus. Researchers found that although traumatic memories can be overcome slowly through intensive training, they are not replaced.

*Negative memories can be actively replaced with positive memories.*

The bottom line is, your emotions play a significant role in your health; therefore, emotional health should be an essential part of your health care plan.

Since fibromyalgia is a chronic condition, it becomes emotionally challenging in addition to the physical challenges it imposes on your life. Having a game plan to deal with your emotional well-being is especially important if you suffer from any chronic disease.

If you have fibromyalgia, you might be able to trace it back to a triggering event, or you might not. Any traumatic experience has the potential to linger in your mind for a lifetime. You can have the perfect diet, the perfect exercise routine, and an ideal life; but if you have lingering unresolved emotional issues, you can still become very sick.

Sometimes the trauma is so extreme that it is obvious you've been impacted. But oftentimes, you might have no idea. And this presents a challenge.

How do you "replace negative memories with positive ones," as the research suggests, if you don't even realize your emotions have at some point been negatively impacted?

The best way to approach this is to just *assume that they have been*. After all, by virtue of being human, everyone has some unresolved emotional "stuff," known or unknown to him or her. And that is what you go for.



The tool I recommend you learn that helps release this emotional sludge is the Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT). If you are a regular reader of my newsletter, this won't be an unfamiliar term to you.

EFT is a form of bioenergetic normalization. It has been described as “emotional acupuncture, minus the needles.”

If you have fibromyalgia, this is something that is going to be extremely helpful. You can do this yourself, at home, and it takes just a few minutes to learn.

I offer a [free EFT manual](#) on my Web site to help you get started, which can be used in conjunction with my video seminar or by itself. There are also trained professional EFT therapists who offer more extensive assistance for more serious emotional issues.

## Exercise is Crucial

For most people with chronic pain, exercise is the last thing they want to do. But physical activity is a key component of healing, as recent studies have confirmed many times over.

In my review of the literature, exercise is perhaps the most studied aspect of the fibromyalgia patient's lifestyle with hundreds of thousands of Internet pages devoted to it.

Numerous studies all show that moderately intense exercise is beneficial for people with fibromyalgia, particularly for improving their physical fitness and self-efficacy, and partly for reducing their pain.<sup>10</sup> According to a WebMD Fibromyalgia Guide:<sup>11</sup>

*Recent scientific studies have shown that, for most patients, range of motion, strengthening, and aerobic conditioning exercises are safe and necessary.*

A study of 135 women was done at Harvard Medical School in 2007, suggesting that regular, moderately intense exercise can benefit many fibromyalgia sufferers<sup>12</sup>.

The women in this study did a combination of walking, strength training, and stretching three times a week for four months. They reported a significant easing of symptoms—in one group assessment, the degree of body pain was reduced by 45 percent after 16 weeks of exercise.



Many forms of exercise can be beneficial, as long as they are started gradually and progressed gradually. In 2006, there was an interesting study in Brazil that looked at the effectiveness of deep water running on fibromyalgia symptoms, and another in Spain where researchers evaluated fibromyalgia patients exercising in waist-high warm water.

In 2001, a study in Norway compared the effects of land-based and pool-based exercise on women with fibromyalgia. The findings in **all** of these studies was the same: fibromyalgia patients experience reduced pain, improved functionality and better emotional health with exercise as long as they took it reasonably slow.<sup>13</sup>

## Exercising Correctly to Ease Fibromyalgia Pain

One of the crucial things we are beginning to understand about fibromyalgia pain is that it is not made worse by all exertion. It is made worse only by *extreme* exertion. But it is also made worse by inactivity.

So, you have to be like Goldilocks and find the “just right.”

A fascinating study was done by researchers at the University of Michigan Health System and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Md.<sup>14</sup> This study found that fibromyalgia patients have similar activity levels as people without those conditions.

But it also found that their tolerance of high-intensity “peak” activities—such as bolting up a staircase, walking several miles, doing an aerobics class, etc.—are much lower than among people without the condition. This was the first research of its kind.

The findings suggest that people with fibromyalgia self-report poor physical function and increased pain after activity because they think in terms of the most intense activities that cause higher levels of pain. What they don’t realize is that they can sustain some level of activity without increased pain. This understanding of how fibromyalgia patients think and experience their world is helping others to help them.

Once people with fibromyalgia experience some success with gentle activity, they can very gradually increase it and will very likely begin to see some symptom reduction. Examples of beneficial types of physical activity are light swimming, yoga, tai chi, and walking.



To summarize, then, what we know about exercise for people with fibromyalgia is:

- It is essential to do it consistently, in some form.
- If you are starting a new exercise program, start slowly and work up gradually.
- Increase your activity as your endurance allows, very slowly. There is a fine line between a beneficial level of activity and overdoing it.
- Avoid types of activity that are high-impact and jar your body such as running, jogging, jumping, high-impact aerobics, tennis, racquetball, etc. Avoid anything

that requires many hours of ongoing moderately high activity since endurance is lower with fibromyalgia, and one can move from feeling fine to not-so-fine very rapidly.

- Activities in which strenuousness varies a great deal (skiing comes to mind) should be met with a good dose of caution and planned breaks.
- Better choices are ones that are gentler to your body and focus on stretching and slower motions such as walking, power walking, low-impact aerobics, yoga, Pilates, tai chi, swimming, dancing, gardening, etc.
- Avoid jarring activities such as horseback riding or riding around on a jet ski, or if you want to try that out, do so *very* carefully at first to see how your body reacts. If a 5-minute ride on a jet ski doesn't leave you feeling like you've been run over by a truck, then you might be okay with going longer next time. It is a matter of finding out what your limits are in a mindful way. Challenge yourself, but be smart about it.

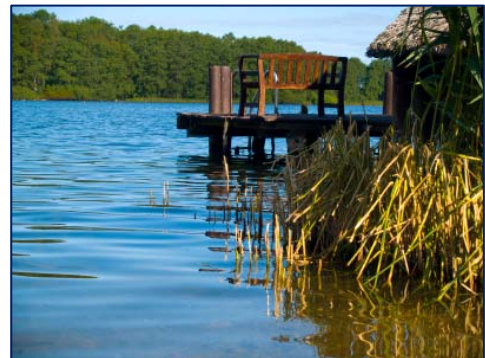
## Water-Based Exercises

Water offers some benefits that land-based exercise does not:

*The buoyancy of water decreases the effects of gravity so it takes less effort to move. And water provides resistance, which promotes strength and enhances balance. Immersion in water also reduces pain perception and aids in relaxation. An exercise done in water will be both easier to perform and more beneficial than the same exercise done on land.*

One big reminder when it comes to water-based exercise is that the safest place to do it is not in the pool at your gym. By far, the greatest benefit is to swim in the ocean, or in a lake, just as your ancestors did.

Not only are you gaining the benefits of the exercise itself, but you are also absorbing health-enhancing sea minerals that are dissolved in the seawater. The saltwater also kills parasites living on your skin and in your nasal passages and eyes, which takes a huge load off your immune system.



Granted, not all of you have easy access to the ocean, but you can make sure to limit your exposure to harmful chemicals like chlorine and bromine when you use pools and spas.

*The amount of chlorine you absorb from one hour in a pool far exceeds what you would get from drinking unfiltered tap water for a week.*

Chlorine is rapidly absorbed through your skin from swimming pools (*and* your shower and bath), where it can contribute to some major disruptions in your biochemistry, leading to severe illness. Evidence is mounting that chlorine in your water is contributing to spontaneous abortions, congenital malformations, bladder cancer, respiratory infections, asthma and other respiratory conditions.

If not chlorine, then what can you use to keep your pool clean and safe?

The safest and most effective product is ozone. Ozone is one of nature's most powerful oxidizers and purifiers. It destroys bacteria on contact and even prolongs equipment life, leaving no toxic residue.

If your pool is outdoors, you will need to shock it occasionally with disappearing chlorine to kill algae spores, because ozone isn't particularly good at killing those. But otherwise, an ozone generator is your best option and will allow you to decrease chlorine usage by over 90 percent.

## Acupuncture as an Alternative

There have been few studies about the efficacy of acupuncture that have been large enough in scale, long enough in duration, and with tight enough controls to yield meaningful results. Studies have emerged with variable results.

It does seem to be true, however, that there are more studies that demonstrate acupuncture *is helpful* to fibromyalgia patients than studies that fail to show it helps.

Acupuncture studies are very difficult to design and implement since acupuncture is much more difficult to do as a "placebo" in a double-blind controlled scenario than testing a drug would be. Design flaws abound in these studies. For example, it is not easy to convince someone they are being given sham needling. It is much easier to give patients a sugar pill and have them believe it's a medication.



One study was presented at the annual meeting of the American College of Rheumatology in San Francisco on November 12, 2001.<sup>15</sup> Sixty women with fibromyalgia were split into three groups. All 60 received amitriptyline at bedtime for pain for 16 weeks.

In addition, 20 of the women received once-a-week 30-minute acupuncture sessions, and a second 20 underwent once-a-week 30-minute sham acupuncture sessions. The result was that the real acupuncture patients were the only ones who showed a statistically significant improvement on measurements of pain, depression and mental health after the first month.

The results lasted for up to 16 weeks, at which time the patients began to slightly regress and needed to resume acupuncture sessions, indicating it was not a one-round treatment.

In a review of literature done by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Public Health Service in 2003<sup>16</sup>, “there was insufficient data to conclude that acupuncture has efficacy for the treatment of fibromyalgia,” although they were open to looking at better studies that were currently underway.

However, in a more recent article found in Medscape<sup>17</sup>, acupuncture was found to be effective on the symptoms of fatigue and anxiety for a group of 50 fibromyalgia patients, although not effective on their pain. I am certain that more studies will be done as complementary treatment approaches become more mainstream.

## The Benefits of Massage

Massage should not be overlooked as an excellent way to decrease pain, decrease stress, and improve sleep. In fact, many hospitals are now making massage a standard part of therapy for their patients.

A CNN article<sup>18</sup> specifically identifies fibromyalgia pain as one of the symptoms massage has been shown to relieve, along with pain from migraine headaches, labor and even cancer.

Additionally, massage has been shown to:

- ✓ Boost your alertness and attention
- ✓ Strengthen your body’s immune system by increasing killer cells
- ✓ Increase endorphins, promoting relaxation and a sense of well being
- ✓ Relieve pain
- ✓ Reduce cortisol and noradrenaline, which slows your heart and respiratory rate, lowers metabolism, and lowers blood pressure
- ✓ Reduce anxiety and depression
- ✓ Relieve insomnia
- ✓ Decrease symptoms of PMS



Massage is one of the oldest forms of medical care used to ease pain and anxiety.

More vigorous massage stimulates blood circulation, which improves the supply of oxygen and nutrients to body tissues and helps your lymphatic system to flush out



waste products. It eases tense and knotted muscles and stiff joints, improving mobility and flexibility.<sup>19</sup>

## Infrared Saunas May Help

Saunas are an excellent way to help your body detox if you are unable to exercise. Ideally sweating through exercise is superior to infrared saunas but frequently the pain of fibromyalgia prevents or limits one from engaging in exercise with sufficient intensity to produce the sweating required to initiate detoxification.

The dry, warming energy of an infrared sauna is highly compatible with your body.

Research has shown that far-infrared heat is more cleansing than the heat of traditional saunas, so you can get more benefit at a lower temperature.

The coils heat your body, rather than heating the air, making it more comfortable. The energy penetrates your tissues several inches deep, enhancing metabolic processes and facilitating healing. Many commercially available units can fit into a bedroom corner and plug into an ordinary electrical outlet.



## The Amazing Healing of Sleep

All of that exercise is going to help you sleep, one of the side benefits of increasing your activity level. According to the National Fibromyalgia Research Association (NFRA), 75 percent of fibromyalgia patients complain of sleep disturbances and fatigue.

Current research suggests that nearly 50 percent of fibromyalgia patients have intrusive alpha wave periods, which interfere with deep, restorative sleep.<sup>20</sup>

Normally, as you are falling asleep, you produce *alpha waves* as the first waves in a series of wave patterns of the sleep cycle. As you fall more deeply asleep, the waves become slower and slower until you reach deep sleep, characterized by very low-frequency *delta waves*.

Way back in the 1970s, researchers discovered that people with fibromyalgia had their deep delta wave sleep interrupted by the intrusion of the faster alpha waves, and the term for this is the *alpha-delta anomaly*.

It is important for your body to be in the delta wave state every night, because it is in this state that your tissues are repaired and your body rejuvenates. Additionally, 80 percent of the growth hormone produced per day is released during delta wave sleep.<sup>21</sup>



Growth hormone is not only responsible for making you taller, it has the vital role of repairing any damage that occurs to your muscles and tissues from the rigors of your day.

If growth hormone can't be released, your body can't get its nightly tune-up and micro-injuries accumulate, leading to worn-out tissues and a weakened immune system; tiny tears in your muscles, which occur due to activity and exercise, are left unrepaired. This leads to aching and the feeling of being totally worn out.

Interestingly, researchers have measured growth hormone levels in people with fibromyalgia and found that they are significantly lower when compared with healthy people; the alpha-delta anomaly could be partly responsible for this.

Growth hormone is known to decline with age, and people with fibromyalgia appear about 33 years "older," based on their growth hormone levels.<sup>21</sup>



Fibromyalgia patients also have a higher incidence of sleep apnea, upper airway resistance syndrome, insomnia, restless legs syndrome (RLS), and periodic limb movement syndrome (PLMS). These symptoms increase the symptoms of pain and fatigue, negatively impacting quality of life.

It is easy to see how poor sleep can make fibromyalgia symptoms worse. If you don't sleep well, you aren't going to feel well. If you don't feel well, it's hard to sleep well, and the vicious cycle goes on. This could explain why fibromyalgia patients complain of feeling "out of gas," and as if they had been "run over by a truck," and other similarly colorful metaphors.

Therefore, enhancing sleep is a critical part of the treatment of fibromyalgia.

There are specific techniques you can implement into your life that will improve your sleep. For the complete list, please read [33 Secrets to a Good Night's Sleep on Mercola.com](#). Here are a few teasers:

- I have already discussed the [Emotional Freedom Technique \(EFT\)](#), and it works for inducing sleep as well as for the other things already discussed.
- Exercise is one of the best ways to improve your sleep so make certain you have a good program in place.
- Avoid before-bed snacks, especially grains and sugars.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Wear socks to bed. A study has actually shown that this reduces night waking.
- Listen to white noise or relaxation CDs.
- Sleep in complete darkness or as close to it as possible.

- No TV right before bed.
- Keep the bedroom no warmer than 70 degrees F.
- Eat a high-protein snack several hours before bed, along with a small piece of fruit.
- Avoid caffeine after noon.
- Take a hot bath, shower or sauna before going to bed.
- Remove the clock from view.

These suggestions are explained in more detail in the above-mentioned article, along with many more.

## Final Thoughts

Medical science and complementary medicine have come a long way in the understanding and the legitimization of fibromyalgia. For so many years, people with this syndrome were brushed off, accused of malingering, or simply labeled as whiners.

As advancements in research unravel the mysteries of this disease, we will finally see stigma replaced by understanding as science begins to find some long-awaited answers about this complicated disorder.

In the meantime, you can significantly reduce your symptoms and put a little spring back in your step. All it takes is a few lifestyle changes in the basic areas of diet, sleep, and exercise, and a willingness to explore some alternatives. In time, you just might find some little gems that really make a difference in how you feel.

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