

# What Is Fibromyalgia?

## *Fast Facts: An Easy-to-Read Series of Publications for the Public*

Fibromyalgia is a disorder that causes muscle pain and fatigue (feeling tired). People with fibromyalgia have “tender points” on the body. Tender points are specific places on the neck, shoulders, back, hips, arms, and legs. These points hurt when pressure is put on them.

People with fibromyalgia may also have other symptoms, such as:

- Trouble sleeping
- Morning stiffness
- Headaches
- Painful menstrual periods
- Tingling or numbness in hands and feet
- Problems with thinking and memory (sometimes called “fibro fog”).

## **What Causes Fibromyalgia?**

The causes of fibromyalgia are unknown. There may be a number of factors involved. Fibromyalgia has been linked to:

- Stressful or traumatic events, such as car accidents
- Repetitive injuries
- Illness
- Certain diseases.

Fibromyalgia can also occur on its own.

Some scientists think that a gene or genes might be involved in fibromyalgia. The genes could make a person react strongly to things that other people would not find painful.

## **Who Is Affected by Fibromyalgia?**

Scientists estimate that fibromyalgia affects 5 million Americans age 18 or older. Most people with fibromyalgia are women. However, men and children also can have the disorder. Most people are diagnosed during middle age.

People with certain other diseases may be more likely to have fibromyalgia. These diseases include:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Systemic lupus erythematosus (commonly called lupus)
- Ankylosing spondylitis (spinal arthritis).

Department of Health  
and Human Services  
Public Health Service

National Institute of Arthritis  
and Musculoskeletal and  
Skin Diseases  
National Institutes of Health  
1 AMS Circle  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892-3675

Phone: 301-495-4484;  
1-877-22-NIAMS (free of charge)  
TTY: 301-565-2966  
Fax: 301-718-6366  
E-mail: NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov  
www.niams.nih.gov



Women who have a family member with fibromyalgia may be more likely to have fibromyalgia themselves.

### **How Is Fibromyalgia Treated?**

Fibromyalgia can be hard to treat. It's important to find a doctor who is familiar with the disorder and its treatment. Many family physicians, general internists, or rheumatologists can treat fibromyalgia. Rheumatologists are doctors who specialize in arthritis and other conditions that affect the joints or soft tissues.

Fibromyalgia treatment often requires a team approach. The team may include your doctor, a physical therapist, and possibly other health care providers. A pain or rheumatology clinic can be a good place to get treatment.

In June 2007, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Lyrica\* (pregabalin) as the first drug to treat fibromyalgia. Doctors also treat fibromyalgia with medicines approved for other purposes. Pain medicines and antidepressants are often used in treatment.

### **What Can I Do to Try to Feel Better?**

There are many things you can do to feel better, including:

- Taking medicines as prescribed
- Getting enough sleep
- Exercising
- Eating well
- Making work changes if necessary.

### **What Research Is Being Done on Fibromyalgia?**

The NIAMS sponsors research to help understand fibromyalgia and find better ways to diagnose, treat, and prevent it. Researchers are studying:

- Why people with fibromyalgia have increased sensitivity to pain
- The role of stress hormones in the body
- Medicines and behavioral treatments
- Whether there is a gene or genes that make a person more likely to have fibromyalgia.

\*Brand names included in this booklet are provided as examples only, and their inclusion does not mean that these products are endorsed by the National Institutes of Health or any other Government agency. Also, if a particular brand name is not mentioned, this does not mean or imply that the product is unsatisfactory.

### **For More Information on Fibromyalgia and Other Related Conditions:**

#### **National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)**

National Institutes of Health

1 AMS Circle

Bethesda, MD 20892-3675

Phone: 301-495-4484 or

877-22-NIAMS (226-4267) (free of charge)

TTY: 301-565-2966

Fax: 301-718-6366

E-mail: [NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov)

[www.niams.nih.gov](http://www.niams.nih.gov)

The information in this publication was summarized in easy-to-read format from information in a more detailed NIAMS publication. To order the Fibromyalgia Q&A full-text version, please contact NIAMS using the contact information above. To view the complete text or to order online, visit <http://www.niams.nih.gov>.

### **For Your Information**

This publication contains information about medications used to treat the health condition discussed here. When this publication was printed, we included the most up-to-date (accurate) information available. Occasionally, new information on medication is released.

For updates and for any questions about any medications you are taking, please contact the U.S. Food and Drug Administration at 1-888-INFO-FDA (1-888-463-6332, a toll-free call) or visit their Web site at [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).