

FIBROMYALGIA-THE BASICS

Fibromyalgia is a musculoskeletal pain and fatigue disorder that involves the soft fibrous tissues of the body. Its etiology is unknown, although, it is believed to be triggered by an infection, trauma, or other disorder such as Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Patients with Fibromyalgia complain of generalized body ache. The muscles may feel like they are being pulled or overworked. Complaints include muscle twitching and burning. More women are afflicted with this disease, and Fibromyalgia does not discriminate as to age. Other associated symptoms include sleep disorders, fatigue, irritable bowel syndrome, and TMJ disorder. Precipitating factors may include changes in weather, hormonal fluctuations (premenstrual and menopausal states), stress, anxiety, and depression.

Treatment is geared at improving the quality of sleep and reducing the pain. Muscle relaxants, pain medications such as Ultram or opioids, and anti-depressants such as Nardil are often used. Use of steroids usually has mixed results and do not usually help unless there is some underlying autoimmune process. In addition to these medications, patients will need trigger point injections, physical therapy, occupational therapy, acupuncture, biofeedback, and an exercise program

Long term follow-up of patients with Fibromyalgia show the syndrome to be chronic in nature. Fibromyalgia can impact daily living activities as well as affect the ability to perform a full work schedule. The disease can be as disabling as rheumatoid arthritis.