

Fibromyalgia

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia (fi·bro·my·al·gi·a) is a condition that causes pain all over the body (also referred to as widespread pain), sleep problems, fatigue, and often emotional and mental distress. People with fibromyalgia may be more sensitive to pain than people without fibromyalgia. This is called abnormal pain perception processing.

Fibromyalgia affects about 4 million US adults, about 2% of the adult population. The cause of fibromyalgia is not known, but it can be effectively treated and managed.

What are the signs and symptoms of fibromyalgia?

The most common symptoms of fibromyalgia are:

- Pain and stiffness all over the body.
- Fatigue and tiredness.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Sleep problems.
- Problems with thinking, memory, and concentration.
- Headaches, including migraines.

Other symptoms may include:

- Tingling or numbness in hands and feet.
- Pain in the face or jaw, including disorders of the jaw known as temporomandibular joint syndrome (also known as TMJ).
- Digestive problems, such as abdominal pain, bloating, constipation, and even irritable bowel syndrome (also known as IBS).



What are the risk factors for fibromyalgia?

Known risk factors include:

- **Age.** Fibromyalgia can affect people of all ages, including children. However, most people are diagnosed during middle age and you are more likely to have fibromyalgia as you get older.
- **Lupus or Rheumatoid Arthritis.** If you have lupus or rheumatoid arthritis (RA), you are more likely to develop fibromyalgia.

Some other factors have been weakly associated with the onset of fibromyalgia, but more research is needed to see if they are real. These possible risk factors include:

- Sex. Women are twice as likely to have fibromyalgia as men.
- Stressful or traumatic events, such as car accidents, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Repetitive injuries. Injury from repetitive stress on a joint, such as frequent knee bending.
- Illness (such as viral infections).
- Family history.
- Obesity.

How is fibromyalgia diagnosed?

Doctors usually diagnose fibromyalgia using the patient's history, physical examination, X-rays, and blood work.

How is fibromyalgia treated?

Fibromyalgia can be effectively treated and managed with medication and self-management strategies. You can learn about self-management strategies in the section below titled How can I improve my quality of life?

Fibromyalgia should be treated by a doctor or team of healthcare professionals who specialize in the treatment of fibromyalgia and other types of arthritis, called rheumatologists. Doctors usually treat fibromyalgia with a combination of treatments, which may include:

- Medications, including prescription drugs and over-the-counter pain relievers.
- Aerobic exercise and muscle-strengthening exercise.
- Patient education classes, usually in primary care or community settings.
- Stress management techniques such as meditation, yoga, and massage.
- Good sleep habits to improve the quality of sleep.
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) to treat underlying depression. CBT is a type of talk therapy meant to change the way people act or think.

In addition to medical treatment, people can manage their fibromyalgia with the self-management strategies described below, which are proven to reduce pain and disability, so they can pursue the activities important to them.

What are the complications of fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia can cause pain, disability, and lower quality of life. US adults with fibromyalgia may have complications such as:

- **More hospitalizations.** If you have fibromyalgia you are twice as likely to be hospitalized as someone without fibromyalgia.
- **Lower quality of life.** Women with fibromyalgia may experience a lower quality of life.
- **Higher rates of major depression.** Adults with fibromyalgia are more than 3 times more likely to have major depression than adults without fibromyalgia. Screening and treatment for depression is extremely important.

- **Higher death rates from suicide and injuries.** Death rates from suicide and injuries are higher among fibromyalgia patients, but overall mortality among adults with fibromyalgia is similar to the general population.
- **Higher rates of other rheumatic conditions.** Fibromyalgia often co-occurs with other types of arthritis such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, and ankylosing spondylitis.

How can I improve my quality of life?

- **Get physically active.** Experts recommend that adults be moderately physically active for 150 minutes per week. Walk, swim, or bike 30 minutes a day for five days a week. These 30 minutes can be broken into three separate ten-minute sessions during the day. Regular physical activity can also reduce the risk of developing other chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Learn more about [physical activity for arthritis](#). You can exercise on your own or participate in a CDC-recommended physical activity program.
- **Go to recommended physical activity programs.** Those concerned about how to safely exercise can participate in physical activity programs that are proven effective for reducing pain and disability related to arthritis and improving mood and the ability to move. Classes take place at local Ys, parks, and community centers. These classes can help you feel better. Learn more about CDC-recommended [physical activity programs](#).
- **Join a self-management education class,** which helps people with arthritis or other conditions—including fibromyalgia—be more confident in how to control their symptoms, how to live well and understand how the condition affects their lives. Learn more about the CDC-recommended [self-management education programs](#).

Learn more about fibromyalgia

- [National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases—Fibromyalgia](#)
- [American College of Rheumatology—Fibromyalgia Fast Facts](#)
- [National Fibromyalgia and Association](#)
- [MedlinePlus—Fibromyalgia](#)

Learn more about arthritis

- [Arthritis Types](#)
- [Physical Activity for Arthritis](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Arthritis-Related Statistics](#)

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