

Fibromyalgia



University Services

Fibromyalgia

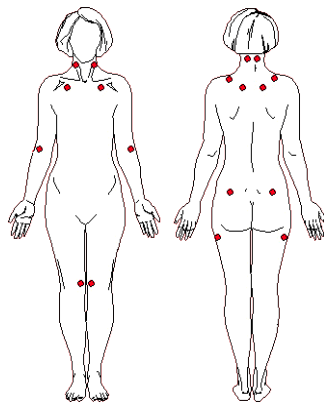
Fibromyalgia is a medical syndrome characterized by widespread pain and stiffness in the muscles and joints as well as sleep problems and chronic daytime fatigue. Fibromyalgia often includes cognitive difficulties, psychological distress, and debilitating fatigue that is not explained or relieved by rest. The pain makes sleep more difficult and sleep deprivation exacerbates pain. Sleep and pain are intricately linked. Most patients experiencing pain show disturbed sleep, and reduced rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. These patients have also demonstrated a normalization of sleep as recovery proceeds. This syndrome is estimated to affect between 2% and 6% of people worldwide including nearly 3.7 million Americans.

Fibromyalgia can affect people of all ages and sexes. It has been found that 80– 90% of people diagnosed are **Middle Aged Women**.

Diagnosis:

- Widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body for a minimum of three months.

- Tenderness or pain in at least **11** of the **18** specified tender points when pressure is applied.



Symptoms:

Fibromyalgia usually includes a broad range of symptoms including some combination of the following:

- Widespread Pain
- Sleep Disturbances
- Chronic Daytime Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Morning stiffness in the joints and muscles
- Migraine Headaches
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Painful Menstrual Periods
- Numbness or tingling of the extremities
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Temperature Sensitivity
- Dizziness and Balance problems
- Cognitive and Memory Problems
- Mood Disturbance
- Depression and Anxiety

Talk About Your Sleep With Your Health Care Professional

Patients with Fibromyalgia may suffer from Sleep Disorders and Sleep Disordered Breathing.

Sleep Disorders Related to Fibromyalgia

Restless Leg Syndrome (RLS) is more common among patients with Fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis than those who do not have these disorders. It is often described as an unpleasant “creepy crawly” sensation that occurs when the legs are sitting or lying still. The constant need to move the legs to get rid of the RLS sensation often prevents a person from falling asleep. As a result, the person will be extremely tired during the day and unable to perform everyday duties. This wakefulness adds further to the sleep loss a Fibromyalgia patient may suffer from.

Insomnia can affect our sleep during times of stress, loss, or change. Not only can insomnia itself cause discomfort and anxiety, but it can also have effects the next day such as causing problems with concentration, sleepiness, and even mood changes.

Symptoms of Insomnia include:

- Difficulty Falling Asleep
- Frequent Awakenings During the Night
- Waking too early and unable to fall back asleep
- Waking Up Feeling Un-refreshed

*There are many conditions that could lead to widespread pain and chronic fatigue. Individuals with **Sleep Apnea** experience symptoms similar to those of fibromyalgia. Sleep Apnea should be considered in the differential diagnosis of Fibromyalgia.*

Sleep Apnea is a breathing disorder that is usually associated with loud or heavy snoring interrupted by pauses and gasps. During Apnea, blood oxygen is reduced to the entire body, sometimes producing serious irregular heart beats and significantly reduced oxygen to the brain. Reduced muscle tone in the throat, enlarged tonsils, or being overweight can cause Sleep Apnea.

Difficulties that can result from this include:

- Decreased ability to concentrate
- Fatigue and/or loss of energy
- Mild to marked depression
- Morning Headaches
- Forgetfulness
- Anxiety
- Decreased interest in sexual activity

Treatment of Fibromyalgia:

Prioritize Sleep– it is important for people with Fibromyalgia to maintain a regular sleep schedule. Also, treatment for any and all Sleep Disorders is imperative to their recovery.

Create a quiet environment– Sound can serve as a stress to many people. Chronic pain has been known to intensify when there is sound stress.

Aerobic Exercise– Three times a week can reduce tender-point tenderness.

Medication– Recent data show that sodium oxybate (Xyrem), used to treat cataplexy, may provide symptomatic relief of Fibromyalgia.

Keep In Mind:

- Fibromyalgia symptoms may be similar to those of Sleep Apnea.
- Patients with Fibromyalgia may also have Sleep Apnea, the most common Sleep Disorder.
- *The possibility of a Sleep Disorder should be considered before initiating medical treatment of Fibromyalgia.*



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