



Chronic Pain and Women's Health Newsletter

New Insight into Fibromyalgia



Those who suffer with fibromyalgia deal with several frustrations.

Not only is it difficult for others to understand the devastating effects this condition has on those who have it, but to date there have been few answers to it's causes and treatments that may help.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition with symptoms including muscle tenderness, difficulty sleeping, depression, fatigue, and inability to do daily activi-

ties. Sufferers have difficulty with even simple tasks such as housework or shopping.

Fibromyalgia is not uncommon. The American College of Rheumatology indicates that 3-6 million people suffer with fibromyalgia in the United States. The National Institute of Health indicates that 90% of sufferers are women.

To add to the problems of this condition, sufferers do not "look" sick and to date there are no definitive tests or cures. Current treatments focus on pain control, depression, and help with sleep distur-

bances. There are medications your physician may recommend for these symptoms.

Research studies indicate that a multidisciplinary approach to treatment is best. They have discovered that people with chronic pain, including fibromyalgia, process pain differently. There appears to be excessive activity in both sides of the brain and differences in processing pain signals. Exercise and biofeedback with emphasis on relaxation and breathing have been shown to reduce pain and improve function in fibromyalgia sufferers.

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Treatments for Pelvic Pain

The International Pelvic Pain Society indicates that there are 9.2 million sufferers of pelvic pain in the United States. This includes 15 % of women between ages 18 and 50. Although more prevalent in women, it is also seen in men and children.

There are many different diagnoses which are included under the term pelvic pain including chronic pelvic pain syndrome, vestibulitis, interstitial cystitis (bladder irritation), dyspareunia (painful intercourse), myofascial pain syndrome, post surgical

adhesions, and pelvic floor myalgia. All of these conditions include dysfunction and pain of the pelvic floor muscles. This leads to difficulty in performing normal activities.

For people who suffer

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Clemens Physical Therapy PLLC

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Special points of interest:

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- © Help for Pelvic Pain
- © Preventing Stress
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Pelvic Pain cont...

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with pelvic pain it is important to see your physician to rule out pelvic organs or disease as the cause of pain. Once these have been ruled out as a cause of the pain, the pelvic floor muscles are often the culprit.

A multidisciplinary approach including biofeedback, medication, and treatment of trigger areas in the muscle is the best approach to this type of pelvic pain. Your physician can help determine the best medications for your situation. A physical therapist who specializes in biofeedback and trigger point treatment can help with the muscle dysfunction.

Biofeedback uses a special sensor

to read the activity of the pelvic floor muscles. As these muscles are internal it is very difficult for a person to know if they are functioning properly. It is also difficult to do exercises properly without being able to "see" if the muscles are doing what they are supposed to.

In people with pelvic pain there is typically two types of problem. One is that the muscles are weak

and do not function properly. The other is that they are contracted and in spasm most of the time. Both of



these conditions can lead to chronic pain but are treated differently. The biofeedback allows for the determination of which type of problem there is and then helps give feedback for individualized treatment.

Just like any muscle, the pelvic floor can develop

tightness and trigger areas.

Research has shown that people improve significantly and

have decreased pain with trigger point treatment and stretching of the pelvic floor muscles.

There are several treatments available for pelvic pain!

Prevention Tips: Stress

1. Breathe— deeply and slowly
2. Give yourself permission to take worry “holidays” . Even taking 5 minutes a day to let go of all your worries can be helpful and decrease your stress.
3. Write down things you have to do or are worried about. Getting these things on paper can let you mind relax from having to remember details.
4. Keep a gratitude journal— Sometimes we become so focused on the things that are wrong in our lives that we forget that there are a lot of good things in our lives. Take time to be thankful.
5. Simplify your life—try to decrease clutter, do only things that you must do or want to do and say NO to things that are not a priority.
7. Break down big things into small things- all activities are doable if you are able to manage them in small pieces. Even tasks you don't want to do are easier if you don't try to do them all at once.
8. Take time for yourself— you cannot give of yourself to others if you do not have the energy to give. Taking time to do things you enjoy renews

Biofeedback

Biofeedback is a way to “see” body processes. Special sensors are used to display these functions on a computer screen. It is very useful for conservative management of problems.

Some of the things you can monitor include heart rate, breathing, and muscle tension. Since these are body processes that aren't very visible, biofeedback allows you to “see” them. This allows someone trained in



Biofeedback allows you to “see” body functions.

recognizing abnormalities to recognize problems and then help correct them. They can then show the patient how to change these functions themselves. Once a person learns the correct way of functioning , they can continue to do this on their own.

In the case of chronic pain, biofeedback can be used to help teach a person to

relax by improving breathing patterns and tense muscles. It can also help a person learn how to control and manage pain and be able to do more with less pain. For someone with headaches, it is useful to help improve posture and decrease muscle tension. This helps prevent headaches and relieve them when they occur. For bladder control, it is very useful to help isolate the nature of the problem and then increase or decrease muscle tension as needed. For people with TMJ (jaw pain) it helps improve posture, muscle tightness and teeth grinding.

Fibromyalgia Cont:

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Exercise must be specifically tailored to the individual needs of a person with fibromyalgia. Sufferers can't just do a typical exercise program as they end up with worse pain after improperly performed activity. Activities such as Yoga and Tai Chi, methods of gentle movement and stretching, are ideal for people with this condition if they receive proper instruction.

Biofeedback is another very useful treatment according to the research findings. It is a way to "see" body functions such as heart rate, breathing, and muscle tension. Once these

processes can be seen, a person can learn to change bad habits and have some conscious control over pain and relaxation responses. People in severe pain benefit from starting with biofeedback and postural training to decrease pain enough to be able to start an exercise program. Once learned, this process can be maintained by the person on their own and allows them to tolerate more activity.

An interesting new study is ex-

amining several aspects of fibromyalgia. Conducted by Dr Martin Morell and colleagues at the Sitrin Medical Rehabilitation Center in New York,



Tai Chi and Yoga are effective yet gentle forms of exercise

this study has three phases designed to determine the benefit of multidisciplinary treatment of fibromyalgia. Treatment includes biofeedback, breathing training, posture improvements, medications, psychological screenings. Preliminary

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I am in a lot of pain. Will treatment make me feel worse?

A: Most of the patients I see are in a lot of pain. Because of this I have specialized in gentle, yet effective ways of dealing with this type of problem that aren't found in typical treatment settings. Treatment is tailored to each individual's needs with care taken not to increase symptoms. Even the types of exercise I use are geared to

be very gentle and work well for people in pain. Most patients tolerate treatment very well and improve significantly. Occasionally people have some soreness after treatment which is usually temporary. Drinking lots of water helps get rid of the soreness. Always talk about any adverse symptoms you have and treatment can be modified to improve your comfort.

Will treatment help?

Will I feel worse?

Q: I have chronic pain or fibromyalgia and have tried different types of treatments with no success. What does a physical therapist who specializes in treatment of chronic pain do differently.

A: Chronic pain and conditions such as fibromyalgia do not have a "cure" at this point in time. It is important to see a physician first to rule out other potential medical issues. He or she can then determine the proper medication to help with your condition.

Once you have done this, there is a lot that can be done to help you by a PT who specializes in treatment of chronic pain.

The brain functions differently in those people who have recurrent pain. They also do not get restorative sleep which prevents the body from recovering from even normal daily activities. With proper instruction, things like biofeedback can help change the function of the brain and improve ability to sleep and control your pain.

Once you are able to control pain and do more, exercise can help make you feel better and be more functional. It is important to do the right kind of exercise. Too much exercise or the wrong kind of exercise can make a person with fibromyalgia worse instead of better. People also benefit from gentle "hands on" types of treatment such as myofascial release. All of these things can help significantly with pain and function.

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Helping People Who Hurt



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The content of this newsletter is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to diagnose or suggest treatment for individuals. Please see your health care provider regarding your specific needs.

- Fibromyalgia
- Chronic Pain
- Headaches
- Bladder Control
- Pelvic Pain
- TMJ (Jaw Pain)
- Osteoporosis
- Biofeedback
- Tai Chi, Pilates, Yoga
- Manual Therapy