

Tired of being sick and tired??

Nancy Russell, M.D. June, 2019

Do you suffer from tiredness, aching all over and exhaustion? Do you have non-restful or interrupted sleep? Do you have decreased mental clarity, decreased sex drive and get more than your fair share of infections? If you answered yes to all of these questions, you may have a condition known as fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia can cause a baffling array of symptoms and is frequently misdiagnosed or even dismissed by physicians.

Fibromyalgia is a neuromuscular and sleep disorder that cannot be diagnosed with any specific blood test or laboratory testing. New testing is in the research phase and may be available in the new few years. It is now diagnosed by criteria set forth by the American College of Rheumatology: 1. Widespread pain or achiness, steady or intermittent, for at least 3 months, on both sides of the body and upper and lower body and 2. At least 11 of 18 spots on the body known as tender points. 3. No other medical cause is found for the symptoms. Other associated problems can be irritable bowel syndrome, low sex drive, insomnia, nausea, memory problems, headaches, depression, nervousness, hair loss, numbness/tingling, post-exertion malaise and chronic sinus, bladder, gut or prostate infections.

In my experience with diagnosing and treating people with fibromyalgia, I have had success in helping them get better using a researched protocol by Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D. A good resource for someone with fibromyalgia is Dr. Teitelbaum's book, *From Fatigued to Fantastic*, 3rd edition. He discusses one of the theories why fibromyalgia may occur: hypothalamus dysfunction in the brain. Some known triggers for this to happen are: a major stressful event or a series of stressful events such as a viral infection, automobile accident, pregnancy, recurrent infections, death of a loved one, and toxic or chemical exposures.

The program to getting better is initiated with the S-H-I-N-E protocol. This 5-step protocol begins with Sleep! Getting a restful, uninterrupted 7-9 hours of sleep is the foundation of getting well. A combination of natural and prescription sleep aids may be necessary to achieve this goal. If this sleep goal is not met, and particularly if high blood pressure is also present, an overnight sleep study with a sleep specialist is a must to rule out sleep apnea. Brain neurotransmitters and/or adrenal hormone testing may get to the root of the sleep problem.

H is for hormone balance and support. Due to the hypothalamus gland in the brain being affected, this can produce problems with all the endocrine glands. The result can be low level functioning of the thyroid gland as well as the adrenal and sex glands. These glandular systems can be supported with natural or prescription support.

I is for infections and inflammation. Because of the immune system being less than optimal with this illness, it is not uncommon to see either recurrent or frequent infections. These are commonly sinus, bladder, prostate, gut or lung infections. When treated with many rounds of antibiotics, this can lead to other infections like yeast or candida or bacterial overgrowth. Appropriate treatment is based on laboratory testing.

N is for Nutrition. Nutritional deficiencies are common due to poor diet and/or not absorbing food in the intestine efficiently. The most common deficiencies are vitamin D, vitamin B-12 and magnesium. High doses of these nutrients may be necessary and sometimes injectable nutrients are recommended.

E is for Exercise. Even though strenuous exercise generally can make symptoms worse, many of my patients report good results with stretching exercises, yoga, Pilates, swimming or water aerobics. Start out with only 5 - 10 minutes a day and very gradually increase.

In your pursuit to improve your health, I highly recommend the organization, Fibromyalgia Coalition International. They are the nation's most active organization dedicated to the belief that Fibromyalgia is reversible. For more information, go to their website: www.fibrocoalition.org.

The latest treatments that have some hope for patients with fibromyalgia and auto-immune disorders include LDN, low dose naltrexone and stem cell therapy. I am excited to assist people with fibromyalgia on their journey to better health. If you would like to call my office, we can send you a questionnaire to fill out to see if you meet the fibromyalgia criteria.