



FIBROMYALGIA

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain syndrome characterized by diffuse pain in muscles or tender points (neck, hips, arms or legs), sleep disturbances, anxiety and fatigue (excessive tiredness). This syndrome affects up to 4 percent of the population, mainly women. It is not known what causes fibromyalgia, but a genetic cause may be possible. Stress, either physical, emotional or environmental, may trigger any of the symptoms associated with fibromyalgia. It is difficult to diagnose fibromyalgia because there are no laboratory or other tests available to assist in the diagnosis. Symptoms may overlap with other disease conditions. Usually, the diagnosis is based on the duration of pain symptoms and number of tender points involved.

How is fibromyalgia treated?

The treatment of fibromyalgia requires both medication and nonmedication approaches to effectively manage symptoms. Common medications that have been used in the management of fibromyalgia are listed in Table 1. The most recent and first Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medication for the treatment of fibromyalgia is pregabalin (Lyrica®). Not every patient will respond the same to medication therapy, and several attempts with different medications may be needed before

benefits are seen. In some patients who only have arthritis-type of pain symptoms, benefits may be seen by taking acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug such as ibuprofen (Motrin® or Advil®) or naproxen (Aleve® or Anaprox®). Medications such as morphine (or other potent opioid medications) are usually reserved for those who are not responding to common medication therapy.

Nonmedication therapies are important in improving the symptoms of fibromyalgia and maintaining daily activities.

Further Information

Nonmedication therapies are important in improving the symptoms of fibromyalgia and maintaining daily activities. Some examples including educating yourself by asking a lot of questions and joining an information network or support group. Stress reduction is also key and can include scheduled relaxation time and meditation and/or deep breathing exercises. Getting adequate sleep by maintaining a regular sleep pattern and avoiding daytime napping are other important steps. Additionally, regular, low-impact exercise should be performed, including flexibility, balance and strength activities.

Table 1 Common Medications for Managing Fibromyalgia

Medication Class Generic (Brand) Name	Medication Names	Comments
Tricyclic antidepressants	Amitriptyline (Elavil®, Endep®)	Effective at low doses in treating pain and improving sleep
Muscle relaxants	Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril®)	Effective in treating pain and improving sleep
Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors	Fluoxetine (Prozac®) Paroxetine (Paxil®) Sertraline (Zoloft®)	Effective at higher doses in treating pain and improving sleep
Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors	Duloxetine (Cymbalta®) Venlafaxine (Effexor®)	Effective in treating pain and improving sleep
Anti-seizure	Gabapentin (Neurontin®) Pregabalin (Lyrica®)	Pregabalin is the first FDA-approved treatment for fibromyalgia. Pregabalin improves symptoms of pain and improves functional activity.

For more information, ask your pharmacist!

This information provided by the Michigan Pharmacists Association and:

