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Getting Diagnosed With Fibromyalgia

By Jane Thompson

The first step in getting suspected fibromyalgia diagnosed is to find a physician, nurse practitioner or other health care provider who is knowledgeable and compassionate. Maybe it should be the other way around: compassionate and knowledgeable.

The only sure way to find the right health care provider is by trial and error. You can narrow the field by talking to other people, especially people with fibromyalgia or who suffer some kind of chronic pain, and asking for recommendations. Rheumatologists are specialists in treating fibromyalgia, but many times an internist or family doctor is just as knowledgeable and helpful as a specialist.

Make an appointment with your chosen health care provider and tell him or her your story. Describe your pain and other symptoms and tell her how long you have had them. Answer their questions, and get a sense for how you are being treated. If you feel disrespected, or that you are not being taken seriously, make an appointment with a different health care provider. Keep going until you find a professional that you can relate to. Diagnosing and treating fibromyalgia is a partnership between you and your healthcare provider, and you need to be able to work together on this.

You can expect that a health care provider who is knowledgeable about fibromyalgia will take a health history, perform a physical examination, do some blood work and perform a point tenderness test. That's the minimum.

The blood work will usually be to make sure there aren't other problems, like rheumatoid arthritis, causing your symptoms. The real "test" for fibromyalgia is trigger point tenderness. The doctor will press on 18 specific areas of your body to test for tenderness. If you have achiness all over and are unusually tender over 11 or more of these trigger points, they will usually conclude that you have fibromyalgia.

Even this is a bit tenuous, though, because, as you know, the pain of fibromyalgia comes and goes. There are many other trigger points over your body that may be tender. The ones that are used for diagnosis were chosen by researchers as the ones most commonly affected.

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Until recently, there have been no diagnostic tests for fibromyalgia, other than trigger point tenderness. A few tests are beginning to be used now, though. Your doctor may or may not order these tests; they are not widely used yet and their usefulness hasn't been proven. The tests are:

- * Cytokine levels, which are often abnormal in people with fibromyalgia.
- * APA assay (antipolymer antibody). APA levels are thought to be elevated in people with fibromyalgia.
- * Sleep study. This may be done both because most FMS patients have sleep abnormalities, so an abnormal sleep test makes the diagnosis clearer, and to identify and treat specific sleep problems.
- * MRI or PET scan. People with fibromyalgia have abnormalities in both MRI and PET scan.
- * EEG. Some researchers have discovered EEG abnormalities in people with fibromyalgia.

As more research is done, better, more definitive tests for fibromyalgia may become available. That would be a huge benefit for both patients and health care providers, because diagnosing fibromyalgia would be easier and more certain.

Jane Thompson has an interest in Fibromyalgia. For further information on Fibromyalgia please visit

<http://www.eliminatefibromyalgia.com/fibromyalgia.html>

or

<http://www.eliminatefibromyalgia.com/blog/2006/09/13/getting-diagnosed-with-fibromyalgia/>

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Get Well: Exercise Tips For Fibromyalgia Sufferers

By Kathryn Whittaker

If you suffer from fibromyalgia, it is possible that you will benefit from a carefully constructed exercise program. However, those who have fibromyalgia are often not in the best of shape, so it is important to implement the exercise carefully and with a plan in mind. Here are some exercise tips for fibromyalgia sufferers that can help you to feel better and get your active lifestyle back again.

If you have fibromyalgia, you may not feel like exercising. So, then, why do it? Part of implementing exercise to cope with fibromyalgia is understanding why you would do that.

Exercise can lessen your pain and prevent weakness of your muscles. Endurance exercise, like walking and cycling, can help you become stronger overall and give you additional energy. In a nutshell, exercise will help you feel better overall. As long as you do it the right way, exercise can be

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one of the most effective treatments for those who suffer from fibromyalgia.

Start Slowly

If you suffer from fibromyalgia, you know that you are not usually energetic and that your body has likely become somewhat stagnant. Because of the blow to your overall physical fitness, you should make sure you start slowly. With that in mind, one of the best exercise tips for fibromyalgia sufferers is to go from low amounts and intensities in your workouts and work up to the higher ones and longer sessions. Helpful exercises for those with fibromyalgia include low impact exercises, walking, and anything that may be designed for those with arthritis. Water exercise classes and programs, in fact, are as good as any for those with fibromyalgia.

Stretch First

No matter what exercise you choose to help you with your fibromyalgia, you have to stretch first. No matter what, one of the top exercise tips for fibromyalgia sufferers you will get is to stretch. Stretching helps your body warm up before activity begins. Additionally, it is its own type of exercise and can improve blood flow. You will also greatly reduce the risk of injury as you exercise if you remember to stretch first.

Soreness is Okay

Another one of the exercise tips for fibromyalgia sufferers is to expect some soreness. Listen to your body and make sure you don't overdo things, but when you start a new exercise program, you are going to feel some soreness. As you continue your program and become stronger, though, the soreness will likely begin to subside. If, though, the pain gets worse or is intense, then it is time to cut back on the exercise. Additionally, talk to your doctor before you start an exercise program to make sure your fibromyalgia will cause no complications. If he or she gives you the okay then you will be on your way to feeling better and being happier.

With the help of these exercise tips for fibromyalgia sufferers, you can aid in your own treatment. Exercise will help you feel stronger and increase your stamina. Before you know it, if you plan it right, you will be exercising more and feeling your fibromyalgia less. In the end, isn't that the only goal you

really have?

Kathryn Whittaker has an interest in Health & Beauty related topics. To access more information on

<http://www.gazettenews.org/category/health/>

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<http://www.gazettenews.org/2006/06/07/fibromyalgia2/>

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