

## Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition, characterized by widespread muscular pain and tenderness, symptoms of fatigue, and thinking and memory problems. The cause is unknown, but is thought to be due to changes in how the nervous system processes pain.

People with fibromyalgia may also have other symptoms such as:

- Muscle stiffness, especially in the morning
- Headache
- History of depression
- Anxiety
- Pain or cramps in the abdomen or pelvis
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Irritable bladder syndrome
- Difficulty sleeping; waking unrefreshed
- Temporomandibular (jaw joint) pain
- Numbness or tingling

Because there are no blood tests, x-rays, or muscle biopsies that can be used to diagnose fibromyalgia, you'll need to work closely with your health care providers to obtain an accurate diagnosis. Many conditions can cause pain and fatigue, so it's important to have a thorough medical examination to rule out other conditions.

### HOW CAN A PHYSICAL THERAPIST HELP?

#### Help You Take Control through Information

Your physical therapist can explain how fibromyalgia affects the way your body perceives and responds to pain, and how you can start to take control of the pain.

#### Manage Symptoms through Exercise

Regular, moderate, exercise is an important part of managing fibromyalgia. Your physical therapist can develop and supervise an individualized exercise program that addresses your symptoms, and decreases pain and improves function.

#### Improve Your Range of Motion

Your physical therapist may use manual therapy techniques to move your joints while you are relaxed to help improve your joint motion.

#### Use of Special Techniques to Reduce Pain and Restore Function

Research indicates that the best results likely come from combining a variety of treatments. Physical therapists are educated and experienced in a variety of treatment modalities, and can develop an individualized treatment plan based on your symptoms.



Fibromyalgia Affects Almost

**5** million people in the United States