



[www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)  
800-283-7800

# Living with Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia affects one in 50 people in the United States. Women get fibromyalgia more often than in men. This guide will help you learn more about fibromyalgia.

- Tingling or cramping in your arms and legs
- Jaw pain

## WHAT IS FIBROMYALGIA?

**Fibromyalgia** (fy-bro-my-AL-ja) causes pain all over the body, mostly in your muscles.

Some parts of the body hurt more than others. These parts are called tender points. Fibromyalgia also can make you feel tired and stiff and unable to sleep.

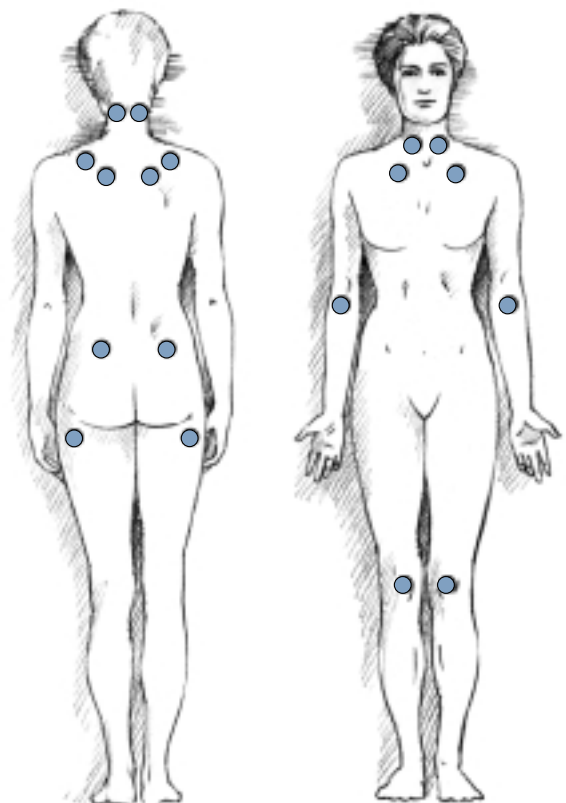
## HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE FIBROMYALGIA?

If you have fibromyalgia, you may:

- Have pain in tender points in the body
- Feel tired all the time
- Have problems sleeping
- Feel stressed or depressed
- Get confused or forgetful a lot

Other signs or symptoms of fibromyalgia are:

- Severe headaches
- Stomach pain
- Frequent constipation and diarrhea



The dots show the various locations of tender points. People who have fibromyalgia have sharp pain when the doctor presses down on many of these locations.

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, talk to your doctor.

### WHAT CAUSES FIBROMYALGIA?

Doctors don't know what causes fibromyalgia. They think that many factors may cause fibromyalgia, such as an infection, a trauma, changes in your body or emotional problems.

### HOW DOES MY DOCTOR KNOW IF I HAVE FIBROMYALGIA?

Doctors cannot tell if you have fibromyalgia by looking at X-rays or blood tests.

Instead, doctors look at your medical history and do a physical exam. They are looking for several things:

- If you have pain all over your body that lasts for at least three months
- If you have pain in at least 11 of 18 tender point sites in the body
- If you have any of the other signs or symptoms of fibromyalgia

### HOW IS FIBROMYALGIA TREATED?

Your doctor can make a treatment plan that meets your needs. Your doctor may tell you to:

- Take medicine to ease pain or improve sleep
- Do exercises that stretch your muscles
- Do exercises that improve your overall health
- Learn special ways to relax to ease stress and muscle pain

### WHAT MEDICINE SHOULD I TAKE?

Your doctor may give you medicine to treat your fibromyalgia. Some medicines help relieve your symptoms, such as the pain in your tender points. Other medicines help you sleep and relax your muscles to help you get more rest. Your doctor may also give you medicine for depression or stress.

You may find other medicines at your local grocery store or pharmacy that say they treat fibromyalgia. Be sure to talk to your doctor before taking these kinds of medicines. They may not work with the other medicines you take.

### Remember:

- You can feel better
- Talk to your doctor
- Learn more about your condition
- Follow your treatment

---

**For more information:** The Arthritis Foundation offers a wide variety of books, brochures and videos about different forms of arthritis, treatment and self-management techniques to help you take control of your arthritis. To order any of these products, become an Arthritis Foundation member or to subscribe to the Arthritis Foundation's award-winning consumer health magazine, *Arthritis Today*, call (800) 283-7800. Call or visit our Web site ([www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)) to find out how you can take control of your arthritis and start living better today!

---

This brochure has been reviewed by the AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RHEUMATOLOGY.



### MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of the Arthritis Foundation is to improve lives through leadership in the prevention, control and cure of arthritis and related diseases.



© 2003. Arthritis Foundation, Inc., Atlanta, GA. All rights reserved. For individual use only. Material in this publication may not be reprinted without permission. Send requests for reprint permissions in writing to 1330 W. Peachtree St., Suite 100, Atlanta, GA 30309. For more information about arthritis, call 800/283-7800.

[www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)  
800-283-7800