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Family Physicians Explain Fibromyalgia and How to Manage It

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Fibromyalgia, often identified by its primary symptom of an increased sensitivity to pain, is one of the increasing types of chronic pain syndromes being seen by family physicians.

A condition that causes chronic pain in both sides of the body, above and below the waist in the muscles, joints, ligaments and tendons, fibromyalgia can affect at least 11 of 18 tender points in the neck, spine, shoulders, hips, knees and elbows. Patients with this condition often experience other symptoms such as tingling, stiffness, fatigue and sleep disturbance.

Fibromyalgia can be triggered by a variety of stressors, including trauma, emotional stress, surgery, infection and thyroid disease. The condition affects women nine times more often than men, occurring in 3.4 percent of women under age 50 and 7.4 percent of women between the ages of 70 and 79.

“Family physicians are ideally suited to diagnose and treat fibromyalgia because of the continuing nature of their relationships with patients,” said Dr. A. Patrick Jonas, a family physician in Beavercreek, Ohio. “A chronic, painful disease such as fibromyalgia can be managed best in the context of a therapeutic relationship instead of a more mechanical approach that focuses only on body parts or symptoms.”

Although there is no cure, treatment for fibromyalgia is multifaceted. A formal therapy that involves touch, including massage or physical therapy, is critical to the wellbeing of these patients. Patients can optimize their nutrition by taking multi-vitamins and multi-minerals and eating appropriate amounts of fruits and vegetables. Finally, exercise is a critical aspect of treating fibromyalgia, even though the exercise might be somewhat uncomfortable.

Often times, patients with fibromyalgia consider complementary or alternative strategies to treat the condition. These strategies may include acupuncture, energy therapies or relaxation techniques and/or taking supplements and herbs.

“Family and friends help to make the condition more tolerable. Love is what I call ‘the first drug of choice,’” said Jonas. “Human touch seems to help most people, especially those with fibromyalgia, and hugging helps almost everyone.”

The Ohio Academy of Family Physicians is a statewide professional association with more than 4,400 members, including practicing physicians, family medicine residents and medical students. The scope of family medicine encompasses all ages, both sexes and every disease entity. Family physicians provide comprehensive, continuing care to all members of the family.

FACT SHEET

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Common Symptoms of Fibromyalgia

- Persistent pain
- Pain in the muscle joints, ligaments and tendons
- Pain occurs in the front of the knee, elbows, hip joints and around the neck
- Pain may worsen with activity, stress and weather changes
- Feeling tired or fatigued
- Increased sensitivity to pain
- Poor sleep
- Depression

Tips on Managing Fibromyalgia

- See your family physician
- Exercise
- Massage therapy
- Physical therapy
- Taking a multi-vitamin/multi-mineral supplements as directed by your family physician
- Eating appropriate amounts of fruits and vegetables
- Taking prescription medication

Source: www.familydoctor.org
www.fibrohugs.com
Family Medicine by Robert Taylor, M.D.