

Understanding and supporting someone
with fibromyalgia - watch until 4.29



Explaining
Fibromyalgia
To Family & Friends

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Headstrong 13/07

Fibromyalgia, an invisible illness

Why talk about this?



What is fibromyalgia?

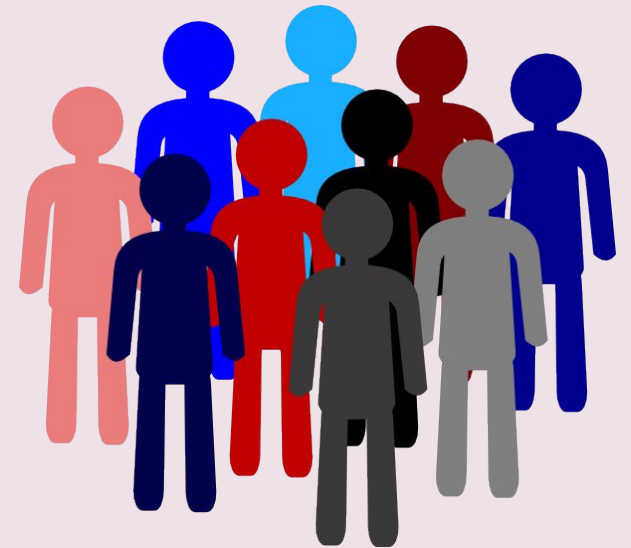
- A **chronic disease** that causes **pain** and tenderness throughout the body, as well as **fatigue** and trouble sleeping. This implies a heightened sensitivity to pain.
- Scientists do not fully understand the cause of it, still to this day. But it is a lot more well known now.
- Fibromyalgia affects about **5% of the population** in the UK, that is nearly **1 in 20 people**.



Who gets diagnosed?

- More **women** than men have it. It often starts at **middle age**. Some scientist believe it might run in families, but it also occurs with no family history. **Repeated physical trauma or emotional trauma** might trigger it.

- Some conditions might make someone more likely to have fibromyalgia or mimick the symptoms, such as: rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, chronique fatigue, depression or anxiety etc.



The symptoms

WIDESPREAD PAIN
MUSCLE PAIN
BONE PAIN
NERVE PAIN
WEAKNESS
SENSITIVITY TO PAIN
SENSITIVITY TO TOUCH
SENSITIVITY TO SMOKE
SENSITIVITY TO LIGHTS
SENSITIVITY TO FOODS
STIFFNESS
MUSCLE SPASMS
FATIGUE
POOR SLEEP QUALITY
COGNITIVE PROBLEMS
FIBRO-FOG
POOR MEMORY
POOR CONCENTRATION
SLOWED SPEECH
CONFUSED SPEECH
HEADACHES
IBS
DIZZINESS
CLUMSINESS
FEELING TOO HOT
FEELING TOO COLD
RESTLESS LEGS
FEET TINGLING
FEET NUMBNESS



ANXIETY
DEPRESSION
FEELING LOW
FEELING HOPELESS
FEELING HELPLESS
LACK OF INTEREST
LACK OF MOTIVATION
SENSITIVITY TO WEATHER

VISION PROBLEMS
NAUSEA
PELVIC PROBLEMS
URINARY PROBLEMS
WEIGHT GAIN
DIZZINESS
FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS
SKIN PROBLEMS
CHEST SYMPTOMS
BREATHING PROBLEMS
BALANCE PROBLEMS
SINUS PROBLEMS
LOWER BACK ACHE
FEET PRICKLING
FEET BURNING SENSATIONS
HAND TINGLING
HAND NUMBNESS
HAND PRICKLING
HAND BURNING SENSATIONS
PAINFUL PERIODS

Treatment

- There is **no cure**, but **treatments** are available to reduce the pain and symptoms. A lot of them involve lifestyle changes.

- Pain relievers
- Antidepressants
- Ibuprofen if the pain is mild
- Antiseizure drugs



- Exercise and physical therapy
- Acupuncture
- Massage therapy
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Balanced and nutrient-focused diet
- Counseling



An invisible disease

- An invisible disease is one that does not exhibit externally visible signs or symptoms.
- Complicates several areas of life. Working, walking, sleeping, engaging in social life...
- **No visible pain to others**, and some difficult **social contexts** to be aware of. By being aware of what the disease implies, you might be able to help and make a difference in someone's life.



How to help someone with fibromyalgia

- Educate yourself
- Help them find a daily routine
- Support them to keep up with daily activities
- Remind them it is OK to stop if they don't feel like doing something
- Provide them with emotional support and understanding



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxaRb8hUKLE>

Fibromyalgia

Let's get the conversation started



Did you know?

Did you know that although anyone can develop fibromyalgia symptoms, it affects around 7 times as many women as men? Or that the condition is difficult to diagnose because there are no specific tests and that symptoms can be similar to other conditions?

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition characterised by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory, and mood issues. Symptoms can vary in severity and may come and go or be persistent.

Possible symptoms

- Widespread pain
- Extreme tiredness
- Muscle stiffness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Problems with mental processes or brain fog (known as fibro-fog)
- Headaches
- Irritable bowel syndrome.

Due to these many non-specific symptoms, fibromyalgia is sometimes mistaken for other conditions and might only be diagnosed many years after the onset of the first symptoms.

Why is it important to talk about fibromyalgia?

- Fibromyalgia is most likely influenced by a combination of genetic susceptibility and exposure to possible triggers, including physical and emotional trauma, viral or bacterial infections, exposure to chronic and acute stress, and hormonal changes.
- People with fibromyalgia experience pain in ways no one else can really understand.
- They may look okay on the outside but are experiencing pain on the inside.
- The condition typically develops between the ages of 30 and 50 but can occur in people of any age, including children and the elderly.
- Stress and trauma may contribute to the development of fibromyalgia, which may impact more on minority groups.
- Data appears to suggest that fibromyalgia is more prevalent in white women, but newer studies emphasise that fibromyalgia might be equally prevalent in black and hispanic women.
- Evidence shows that LGBT+ patients face worse outcomes due to various barriers in accessing appropriate healthcare.

[https://myhealth.ucsd.edu/
InteractiveTools/Quizzes/40
,FibromyalgiaPainPainQuiz](https://myhealth.ucsd.edu/InteractiveTools/Quizzes/40_FibromyalgiaPainPainQuiz)

Full score? Show your
tutor! You might be able
to get an R1 in...



Challenge

How many activities could you do **next week** to celebrate your health?

Make a list of activities that might be tricky for someone with fibromyalgia, and that we sometimes take for granted, and commit to do it with a **mindful** intention next time!

Let your *healthy school rep* know how many you managed to do.

7/10/23

Some useful links to explore

<https://www.fmauk.org/> - Fibromyalgia Action UK

<https://painuk.org/> - Pain UK