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*"treating the cause of your problem, not just the symptoms"*

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## Further Treatment for Fibromyalgia

I realize that I have covered this topic in the past, but due to an overwhelming response from many of the people with fibromyalgia, I have expanded on the various types of conservative treatment that seem to have the greatest success.

New information has recently been released on the treatment of fibromyalgia. It is not surprising that the experts are now recommending a multi-faceted approach to this potentially debilitating disease. This includes exercise to reduce pain and strengthen the muscles, conservative treatment such as chiropractic and massage therapy, stress reduction techniques, regular sleep routines, and a healthy diet. Research is now showing the combination of all of these types of treatment seem to have the most beneficial effect. I will briefly highlight each of them below.

As far as exercise goes, patients with fibromyalgia must expect to participate in a long-term exercise program. Many patients with fibromyalgia avoid exercise for fear it will exacerbate their pain. However, according to studies, most fibromyalgia-related pain caused by exercising lightly usually subsides within 30 minutes. Regular low impact aerobic exercise appears to be the most helpful for raising the pain threshold or tolerance, although it may take months to perceive benefits. A very incremental program of activity, beginning with mild exercise and building over time is important. Patients who attempt strenuous exercise may actually experience an increase in pain and are likely to become discouraged and quit. Every patient must be prepared for relapses and setbacks, which are nearly universal, but these should not dissuade the patient from exercising. Rather they should consult with their Certified Personal Trainer and experiment with various forms of physical activity that can be tolerated using their available energy levels. Much of the pain experienced by patients occurs where muscles join the tendons or bones, particularly when the muscles are very tight. Stretching, or flexibility exercises, are part of the warm-up and cool down of any regular activity program. They should be included in your exercise program to help relieve the tension in the sore muscles of a fibromyalgia patient.

In our office, the Massage Therapists and Chiropractors work together to eliminate what we call "trigger points". These are small but very sore tender points found in muscles that have remained tight for long periods of time. By applying appropriate pressure, these little knots can be eliminated and much of the chronic muscle pain that fibromyalgia patients experience can be relieved.

There is some evidence that people with fibromyalgia have a more stressful response to the conflicts and encounters we experience in life as compared to those people without the disorder. Studies have also shown that when fibromyalgia patients increase their tolerance or ability to handle the physical/emotional stress of the specific symptoms of fibromyalgia, they are more likely to demonstrate physical improvement. This can be done through a number of relaxation and stress reduction techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and meditation. It is important that fibromyalgia patients prioritize their responsibilities, in their life and work, and drop some of the less important tasks or delegate them to others. Such behavior will eventually lead to a more manageable life with less stress and pressure on themselves. There is no doubt that physical and emotional stress can aggravate the symptoms of fibromyalgia.

It is very important that all patients with fibromyalgia establish a regular sleeping pattern. Sleep is essential, particularly since pain is aggravated by disturbed sleep. Improvement in the symptoms of fibromyalgia appears to be low in those who are unable sleep consistently and at night. Swing shift work, for example, is extremely hard on fibromyalgia patients.

The fibromyalgia patient should maintain a healthy diet low in animal fat and high in fiber, with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. There is no concrete evidence that any specific dietary factors are effective in managing fibromyalgia but having a balanced diet will promote your overall health and give you more energy. When taken in moderation, vitamins and most nutritional supplements are generally not harmful and may be used to supplement your diet, but large doses of vitamins and even certain supplements will only give you very expensive urine, as you pee the unused portion out, and may even be toxic.

Because of the difficulties in treating fibromyalgia, many patients seek alternative treatments. You should be very wary of those treatments that advertise guaranteed results or urge you to purchase very expensive, and potentially dangerous, supplements.

Once again, I do not believe that one single treatment alone can cure or even alleviate the symptoms of fibromyalgia. In my clinical experience with many fibromyalgia patients, it appears that patients who undergo a spectrum of treatment seem to respond the best. If you have any further questions on fibromyalgia, please feel free contact me at my office.