

YOUR HEALTH



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Focusing When You Have Fibromyalgia

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Pain ultimately becomes the focus mentally and physically with fibromyalgia patients.

Fibromyalgia (FM) is a central nervous system dysfunction causing many complex symptoms. Our understanding of FM can begin with the name itself; “fibro” - meaning connective tissue of the tendons and ligaments, “myo” - meaning muscle, “algia” - meaning pain.

The symptoms of FM include: pain, aches, stiffness, and fatigue. There are also “tender points” (hypotonic tissue) and with applied pressure these usually generate pain.

FM is difficult to diagnose because of the array of symptoms that tend to mimic other auto-immune disorders. A diagnosis of FM is usually found more in females who have had pain for at least three months

coupled with pain at 11 or more of the 18 tender points found at the attachments of tissue to bone in the body.

Gentle stretching and breathing exercises in a yoga practice can gently encourage the muscles to soften and lengthen. The focus on slow movement and softening the muscles will encourage muscle relaxation and may enhance sensory feedback and control.

An awareness of your alignment, movement, muscle control and pain levels can also be your personal tools to observe, work and listen to your own body. Strengthening is a goal that you can work towards gracefully, and very gradually.

Therapeutic massage can have a significant and relatively long-lasting effect. This modality involves the therapist’s skill in manual therapy of the muscle tissue coupled with passive stretching (range of motion stretching).

Most patients suffering with fibromyalgia have their share of trigger points. Trigger points are tight bands of hyper-irritable tissue that are found in the myofascial system which is the connective tissue that surrounds muscle fibers.

Consistent manual therapy can encourage the pain cycles to slow down and possibly stop. Consistent massage and exercise will usually encourage aerobic cellular respiration in the muscles.

FM patients often have fatigued muscles due to ischemia, oxygen debt that was encouraged by lactic acid accumulating in the tissue and muscle spasms. An increase in circulation may encourage healing of the muscles.

Massage, movement, and meditation can be valuable tools for anyone suffering with FM. Of course, before beginning any therapy or exercise program, discuss it with your doctor.