

Fibromyalgia

What is Fibromyalgia? - It is a chronic non progressive condition characterize typically by pain tenderness fatigue and other symptoms.

How does it occur? - The exact cause is not known. There are some genetics factors, so at least at times may be inherited. Research has shown that people with fibromyalgia have certain subtle changes in some chemicals in the brain and nervous system including decreased serotonin in the brain and increased substance P in the spinal fluid. A current main theory is that people with fibromyalgia have an over sensitivity to pain signals in the brain. This is called central sensitization. Functional MRI studies have clearly shown that it is a physical not a psychological condition, however, stress, anxiety and lack of sleep which are common symptoms, can make the condition worst.

Who gets Fibromyalgia? - About 1 in 50 people develop fibromyalgia at some stage. It is seven times more common in women than in men. In most cases it first develops between the ages of 25 and 55. It is less common in younger adults, and is uncommon in children.

What are the symptoms? - The symptoms and severity varies from person to person. The more prominent symptoms include pain, tenderness in the skin and muscles, fatigue, stiffness and difficulty with concentration. Other common symptoms include headaches, abnormal body sensations, irritable bladder, irritable bowel syndrome and depressive symptoms.

How is it diagnosed? -The condition is diagnosed with the doctors taking a medical history and performing a medical examination. There are no blood tests or imaging (X-Ray) test that are needed for the diagnosis. Your doctor however may advise in some cases tests to be performed to rule out other diseases that can cause similar symptoms.

Is fibromyalgia serious? - Fibromyalgia is not arthritis, it is not due to cancer, and does not damage any joint or tissue. It is not a degenerative disorder and does not shorten expected lifespan. In some cases, symptoms ease or go after a few months. However, in many cases it is a chronic (persistent) condition which tends to wax and wane in severity. Quality of life can become affected.

How is it treated? - Like in the cause of most chronic conditions there is no cure for fibromyalgia, however there are many things that can help. The most successful patients are those well motivated that follow a healthy diet, and balance exercise and rest. Weight control is important. Therapies like acupuncture, aromatherapy, massage, etc. are found helpful for some patients. Cognitive behavioral therapy can help the memory, pain killers and medicines on the antidepressant family, particularly those that increase the serotonin and norepinephrine are the most helpful.

Other considerations - consult with all your doctors about the symptoms. All medicines have potential side effects. Consult your pharmacist and doctors of drug effects and interactions. Always notify your care providers of any concerns.