

Fibromyalgia



Are you experiencing widespread heightened pain and fatigue?"

Fibromyalgia is a medical condition characterised by multiple symptoms. The primary symptom is widespread heightened pain in multiple regions of the body. It is believed that fibromyalgia amplifies your pain receptors via the mechanism that your brain receives these messages. Interestingly women are more commonly affected than men. Commonly affected areas include the neck with tension headaches, alongside the jaw region with TMJ disorders. The trigger of this condition is unknown, but is believed there are links with onset to post trauma or surgery, along with experiences of psychological stress. If you think you have experienced any of the above, you may suffer from fibromyalgia. Although there is no known cure, medications and physical interventions have been shown to reduce symptoms.

Fibromyalgia is a medical condition characterised by multiple symptoms. These are individual to each person but commonly involve multiple regions of pain and discomfort. It affects roughly 2-5% of the population, with a higher incidence found in women. Although it occurs in all age groups, the most common onset is during middle age.

The causes of fibromyalgia are unknown, but it is more commonly found in people with specific co-morbidities:

- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Recent illness or physical trauma
- A family history of fibromyalgia
- Stress/Depression

The trigger for the onset of this condition is also unknown, however certain environmental factors have been theorised:

- Weather changes
- Increased mental stress
- Infections/allergies

It is believed that fibromyalgia amplifies your pain receptors via the mechanism that your brain receives these messages. Commonly affected areas include the neck through tension headaches, alongside the jaw experiencing TMJ disorders. You can also find an increased responsiveness to sensory stimuli, such as heat or light.

The diagnosis of fibromyalgia involves a process first of ruling out other associated conditions which present with a similar set of symptoms. This is due to there being no known medical procedures to firmly diagnose this condition. One such example is rheumatoid arthritis. Your doctor can send you for a red blood cell sedimentation test, which measures the degree of inflammation in your body. Once such conditions have been ruled out, diagnosis of fibromyalgia is confirmed by a physical examination highlighting multiple tender points in your body, alongside your subjective feedback.

How can Physiotherapy aid this condition?

Although there is no known cure, physiotherapy can aid in the reduction of your symptoms to allow you to live better with the condition. The following are a few examples of the methods physio's can use to achieve this:

- **Education:** *through teaching self-management techniques, you can improve your range of motion and strength at affected joints.*
- **Exercise:** *light aerobic exercise has been shown to reduce pain, fatigue and sleep disturbance through the release of endorphins, your body's own "natural high"*
- **Stress management/relaxation techniques:** *through modes such as massage and acupuncture, you can allow your body to relax and reduce its tension.*

If you would like any further information regarding this condition, or would like to book in for an initial assessment, click to book an appointment.

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