

Treatment

Currently, Lyrica and Cymbalta are the only FDA-approved drugs for the treatment of fibromyalgia, but this is just the beginning. Several medications are being developed specifically for this condition. Indeed, the outlook for people with fibromyalgia is definitely improving, with many more effective treatment approaches on the horizon.

Fibromyalgia Treatment Options

Traditional treatment of fibromyalgia is geared toward improving the quality of sleep and reducing pain, which means that a sleep study may aid with individualizing your therapy. Deep level (stage 4) sleep is crucial for many body functions (such as tissue repair, antibody production, and the regulation of various neurotransmitters, hormones and immune system chemicals). Therefore, treatment of the sleep disorders that frequently occur in fibromyalgia patients are usually addressed first because disturbed sleep may be a strong contributing factor to your symptoms.

- Common sleep-aid medications include Ambien, Lunesta, clonazepam, and trazodone.
- Medications that boost your body's level of serotonin and norepinephrine (neurotransmitters that modulate sleep, pain, and immune system function) are commonly prescribed in low doses for the treatment of fibromyalgia. Examples include amitriptyline, cyclobenzaprine, and Cymbalta.
- Ultram may help with the treatment of fibromyalgia pain, although stronger opioids may be needed for addressing moderate to severe pain.
- Muscle relaxants, anti-epileptics (such as Neurontin and Lyrica) and other drug categories may be prescribed as well. Each issue of the Fibromyalgia Network Journal contains information about new treatment options, as well as advice about how to make use of existing medications to minimize fibromyalgia symptoms.

In addition to medications, most fibromyalgia patients will need to use other treatment methods:

- trigger point injections with lidocaine
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- acupuncture/acupressure
- relaxation/biofeedback techniques
- osteopathic manipulation
- chiropractic care
- therapeutic massage
- gentle exercise program

What is the Prognosis?

Long term follow-up studies on fibromyalgia have shown that it is chronic, but the symptoms may wax and wane. The impact fibromyalgia has on daily living activities, including the ability to work a full-time job, differs among patients. Overall, studies show that fibromyalgia syndrome may be equally as disabling as rheumatoid arthritis.

Self-Help Strategies

Lifestyle modifications may help you conserve energy and minimize pain. Commonly endorsed treatment strategies:

- Learn what factors aggravate your symptoms and avoid them, if possible.
- Sit in a hot tub or shower to ease muscle pain and stiffness. Also, hot packs or wraps may be applied to sore spots.
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule, and try to get eight hours of sleep per night.