

FIBROSITIS

(Fibromyositis or Fibromyalgia)



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Inflammation or pain in the muscles, muscle sheaths and connective-tissue layers of tendons, muscles, bones and joints. It affects the muscular areas of the low back, neck, shoulder, chest, arms, hips and thighs. Usually occurs in adults between ages 30 and 60 and in women more often than men (ratio of 5 to 1).

FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Stiffness and weakness.
- Sudden, painful muscle spasms ("charley horse") that worsen with activity.
- Nodules or localized areas that are tender to the touch (trigger points).
- Painful muscle areas.
- Fatigue.
- Difficulty remaining asleep.

CAUSES

Unknown. Possibly an imbalance in brain chemicals or an autoimmune disorder. Until recently, this was thought to be a psychological disorder, but this is no longer the widespread belief. Research continues into the cause.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Stress.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Muscle injury.
- Exposure to dampness or cold.
- Medical history of disorders that produce joint inflammation, such as rheumatoid arthritis or polyarteritis.
- Viral infections.
- Poor nutrition.
- Fatigue or overwork.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid risk factors when possible.
- Get adequate sleep.
- General conditioning exercises.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Spontaneous recovery in some persons. Other persons may have flare-ups and remissions indefinitely. The disease is uncomfortable, but not life-threatening. Symptoms can be relieved with treatment.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Muscle atrophy, disability.
- Abuse of pain-killing medications.



TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Laboratory blood studies to measure inflammation and tests to rule out rheumatoid arthritis or polymyalgia. There is no specific test for fibromyositis.
- Heat relieves pain. Take hot showers, and let the water beat on painful areas. Use heat lamps, electric heating pads, whirlpool or plain tub baths and hot compresses.
- Have someone gently massage painful areas.
- Regular rest patterns may be helpful.
- Eliminate unnecessary stress in your life.
- Learn relaxation techniques.
- Biofeedback is helpful for some patients who use it to relax contracted muscles.
- Maintain social interaction even though the pain may be distracting at times.

MEDICATIONS

- For minor discomfort, you may use non-prescription drugs such as aspirin, acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Cortisone injections into "trigger points" or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs may be prescribed.
- Antidepressants in low dosages and for short periods may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

- Stay as active as possible, even when you are in pain. Stretching exercises may be helpful.
- General conditioning exercises are helpful.

DIET

No special diet, but avoid substances that interfere with sleep, such as caffeine and alcohol.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of fibrositis that last more than 2 or 3 days.
- New, unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.