A GUIDE TO FIBROMYALGIA

A collection of essays and articles about treating fibromyalgia naturally

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December 2013
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Introduction

What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a syndrome that overall is characterized by diffuse pain and overwhelming fatigue that can be debilitating. There are several characteristics of the fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS). They can include:

- Significant joint and muscle pain. Health professionals have identified “trigger points” that are present throughout the body that can elicit pain in particular areas when mild pressure is applied. The affected person with FMS can complain of pain all over the body.
- Significant fatigue, especially with moderate physical exertion. Some people report requiring days to recover from what some may consider to be only mild physical exertion.
- The person can complain of being unable to get a good night’s sleep.
- The person may complain of frequent headaches and may also suffer from depression
- Recurrent abdominal pain, diarrhea and/or constipation which may be due to associated Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

What causes Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS)?

The specific cause of fibromyalgia is not known; however, the development of FMS has been typically thought to occur after a significant “stressor.” The stressor may involve a recent illness, including any recent physical or psychological trauma. For some people, the stressor can be as simple as taking an antibiotic that can alter the bowel flora and precipitate a flare of FMS. The role of Candida overgrowth needs to be considered as a significant contributor to the development of FMS.

There has been a lot of research done on the pain receptors in the body. These receptors may do more than just modulate pain; they may also have a role in the development of FMS but also autoimmune diseases/rheumatologic syndromes.
Fibromyalgia has a reputation for causing major pain and discomfort in the musculoskeletal system. It is often accompanied with fatigue, mood, and memory symptoms. Common treatments include an arsenal of medications such as pain medication, anti-depressants, and even anti-seizure medication. These medications can carry heavy risks and strong side effects that can often times be as bad if not worse than the fibromyalgia symptoms. To challenge medicinal treatment here are 4 alternative treatments for Fibromyalgia.

Acupuncture – This ancient Chinese therapy gains its success by providing balance and energy to the body by means of fine needles inserted into the skin. The idea is that the puncture will change the flow of blood and neurotransmitters to the brain, thus alleviating pain.

Tai Chi & Yoga – Combining meditation, breathing, stretching, and balance, Tai Chi and Yoga help treat Fibromyalgia both mentally and physically. Elongating the muscles and strengthening the core of the body helps give more strength and balance, while mediation can help to diffuse the emotional effect of pain.

Chiropractic Therapy – Aligning the spine and the balancing the chemicals in the brain helps to reduce the amount of pain that the brain perceives. Proper alignment also reduces tension and pressure on the musculoskeletal system which will reduce fatigue and reduce discomfort.

Massage Therapy – Massage has a long history dating back thousands of years. Incorporating muscle relaxation with pressure points promotes slower heart rate, calmer demure, and muscle healing. It also encourages overall relaxation to give energy to combat fatigue.
Trying any one of these methods can increase pain management and discomfort caused by Fibromyalgia. However, your best results will be achieved when you incorporate your own treatment plan using all of these practices in one capacity or another.

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Using Detox to Treat Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia can literally stop a person in their tracks when symptoms flare. With chronic pain, muscle stiffness, and fatigue, trying to function day to day can be compromised when dealing with this debilitating disease. While diet and exercise can help, there are certain detoxifying measures that can have a profound impact on the symptoms that flare up with Fibromyalgia.

The idea behind detox for Fibromyalgia is relatively simple – Be aware of what to put into your body and be aware of what to avoid. The most important thing to encourage a Fibromyalgia detox begins with a combination of herbs brewed into a tea to remove toxins from your body. These herbs include Echinacea, fenugreek, and ginger. Brewed together into a tea, these herbs with honey as a sweetener will begin a natural detox when consumed daily.

While the tea is a good starting point to a Fibromyalgia detox, incorporating certain vegetables is important to help continued toxin removal and encourage the body to react to the new diet. These vegetables include broccoli, cauliflower, beets, onions, artichokes, garlic, sprouts, and any red or green vegetable. Utilize the nutritional value of your vegetables by keeping at least one serving of vegetables a day in their raw state. When a serving of any or all of these vegetables is consumed 3 times or more a day, symptoms for Fibromyalgia will decrease mainly because of the lack of toxins and the beneficial vitamins and nutrients that are customized for the disease.

A good detox diet for Fibromyalgia is only going to work if certain things are avoided to help reduce toxins from the start. Things to avoid are processed
sugars, white flour, saturated fats, and preservatives. It is also important to cut down on dairy and egg products and eat more white meats in place of red. It's important to incorporate more whole wheat as you cut down on meat, dairy, and egg products to fill in nutritional gaps.

Like with any diet, it will take time to make a lifestyle change with this detox and it may be a few weeks before you feel yourself combatting your Fibromyalgia symptoms. However, with commitment to the detox, your body will begin to rebuild and function with less pain and fatigue from the disease.

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• diet.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Detox_Diet_to_Cure_Fibromyalgia

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/stone-soup/4195076305/
Juicing to Treat Migraines, Fibromyalgia, and Osteoarthritis

Juicing - A health phenomenon that is trending across the nation - touts many health benefits towards a healthy lifestyle. With an easily digested arsenal of vitamins and minerals from different sources, juicing has allowed dieters and health nuts to benefit from delicious blends of nature’s energy drink. But more and more, juicing is being used to help treat chronic illnesses and disorders such as migraines, Fibromyalgia, and Osteoarthritis.

Migraines – Migraines and any other kind of headache for that matter can be enough to stop anyone in their tracks. The key to avoiding or treating major headaches and migraines is to include heavy doses of calcium and magnesium in your juice mix. Fennel carries large amounts of both, while ginger adds nice flavor and is a natural pain reliever. A mixture of Fennel, carrots, apples, pineapple, ginger, and cabbage in your juicer should be enough to ease the symptoms of a migraine and has a sweet taste from the apples and pineapple.

Fibromyalgia – Fibromyalgia is best treated when juices incorporate high levels of antioxidants. When trying to treat the symptoms of Fibromyalgia it is important to incorporate high energy fruits and vegetables along with those high in antioxidants. Mixing cranberries, cherries, carrots, celery, and spinach will give you a large dose of antioxidants and high energy as well. Apples and ginger can also be added for taste and pain management.

Osteoarthritis – The secret to treating osteoarthritis by juicing is anti-
inflammatories and antioxidants. These can come from a variety of sources of fresh fruits. Mix dark pigmented fruit such as cherries, blackberries, and red grapes with ginger, and honey. The dark pigmented fruit contain anthocyanins which have been documented to have both antioxidants and anti-inflammatory values. The ginger and honey make it more palatable and provide pain management.

Juicing is a quality source of vegetable and fruit nutrition in a manageable and enjoyable system. The key to any chronic illness management is to commit to a certain therapy and follow through with it. With some planning, these juicing ideas can be incorporated into any daily routine and begin to provide relief for migraines, Fibromyalgia, and Osteoarthritis.

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Fibromyalgia, Meditation, and Neuroscience – Working Together To Provide Relief

Fibromyalgia has notable physical symptoms that attack the body: wide-spread pain, chronic fatigue, and notable tender spots in the upper body. Common treatments include physical therapy and medication to help treat the overall symptoms. New studies show that combining neuroscience and meditation may offer a new direction in treating Fibromyalgia.

The theory behind neuroscience and meditation combining to understand and treat Fibromyalgia treatments builds from an emotional and mental approach. According to research, Fibromyalgia sufferers have a neurological pathway that translates the way they feel pain differently than most. This pathway makes the chronic symptoms feel magnified and more centralized than the average person. Combined with an overall lower threshold for pain statistically, Fibromyalgia subjects feel their symptoms on a much higher level than the average person.
Meditation is the practice of focusing thought and energy on a specific thought – in this case, the symptoms of Fibromyalgia. Since studies show that those diagnosed with Fibromyalgia translate pain differently on a subconscious level, it would stand to reason that meditation could be used to effectively treat the symptoms. Building on the theory of neuroplasticity – the thought that nerve cells within the brain have the ability to change themselves – incorporating meditation should have the power to bring the mind to a level of consciousness that can alter how pain is perceived.

Along with its tendency to incorporate relaxation techniques, meditation can retrain the brain to experience Fibromyalgia symptoms differently and bring relief for tension, fatigue, and depression often associated with the illness. Just in general practice, meditation has shown significant success in creating balance for anyone that wants to experience less stress and tension on a muscular and emotional level.

With the brains ability to mold itself and the research continually expanding, it is entirely possible that meditation could become a front-runner in the treatment of Fibromyalgia. The mental capabilities of a person far outshine most medications without the use of harsh narcotics or chemical supplement. This may be a new opportunity to not only treat Fibromyalgia, but to ultimately cure it with both meditation and neuroscience studies.

Reference:
- fmaware.org/site/News28b55.html

Photo Credit: uic.edu/las/LIN/
Chiropractic Care and Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia, characterized by a widespread muscle pain or weakness, affects more than 5 million people a year in the United States. With the most well-known treatment for the disease being medications such as Cymbalta and Lyrica, some sufferers are looking for different approaches for their overall pain management. Chiropractic care is emerging as an effective treatment for the pain and stiffness associated with Fibromyalgia.

While it may take several sessions, chiropractors aim to realign the vertebrae and thereby repair any chemical imbalance in the brain and spinal fluid that trigger pain. These sessions can range from a simple alignment to a full spinal, hip, and joint adjustment. It can often help with overall muscle pain, tension, and even the fatigue that is associated with Fibromyalgia.

The theory is that by utilizing chiropractic care, the muscles are forced to work in their best capacity. This is achieved when proper alignment of the spine and joints reduces inflammation and tension in the muscles. The nerves associated with the spine help to create a chemical balance in the brain so that pain is less obtrusive.

It isn’t a cure and it certainly isn’t a quick fix for Fibromyalgia, chiropractic care can help provide pain management on a consistent level. This type of therapy can be combined with a Fibromyalgia care plan to help the overall daily management of the debilitating disease.

Reference:
• Chiromatrix, 2013
• stanfordchiropractic.com/Fibromyalgia.html

Photo Credit: colloidalsilversecrets.blogspot.com/2012/11/colloidal-silver-and-fibromyalgia-pain.html
I was always a bit fatigued, but it became extreme last spring, 2012. I began feeling depressed and felt a heavy pain that I had not experienced before. There was even some anxiety involved. After a few doctors and many tests, the diagnosis was handed down - Fibromyalgia.

As a certified Holistic Health Coach the prescribed medication was not an option for me. My first question to the doctor was about the medication he suggested knowing one of the side effects was weight gain. I asked him how would I move my body - even go for a walk - if I gained weight, resulting in possibly feeling even worse (which I didn’t think was possible at the point in time). His simple answer was that I probably would gain weight and walking wouldn’t help me. My gut told me otherwise. I had in hand a diagnosis that helped me to have a name for what I was up against. I searched for the direction in which I would go forth with my healing.

After a long road I would say that I am recovered, although any period of stress will bring on symptoms. Then it’s time to kick back on the self-care. One of the most important things in my personal recovery was being and staying active with regular exercise.

At first, it was difficult. How do you move and exercise when you can hardly walk without pain and your fatigue feels like a heavy fog weighing you down? But I knew exercise would help. Knowing the body and how the systems work together, synergistically, not separately, I knew that movement and exercise would help me - and it did.
First, I began slowly. I would walk up and down the street. I felt frustrated and tired. But I was consistent. Each day I would move and stretch. I added yoga and just did it until I wanted to stop – not until I physically could not. It was important not to overexert, but to warm up my body gently.

It turns out exercise is an amazing antidote for stress and relieving stress is a big YES when it comes to healing fibromyalgia. Being physical also turns on natural endorphins - the body's natural opiates. Like a drug, endorphins are released during exercise and can help reduce pain from – you guessed it –the symptoms like those of fibromyalgia. Endorphin release from exercise also helps reduce anxiety, stress and depression. Natural balancers are exactly what they are.

Many of the body’s own chemicals are helpful in the treatment of fibromyalgia. Taking serotonin for instance. This little neurotransmitter aids in regulating sleep cycles, mood, pain perception and immune system function. I found it interesting how 5-HTP is a well-known and useful tool in the treatment of fibromyalgia and was very helpful in my own treatment. 5-HTP works in the brain and central nervous system by increasing the production of serotonin. Do you know what else helps increase production of serotonin? Exercise. Regular physical activity increases levels of tryptophan, which is used by the body to create serotonin.

How do you get started? First always make sure that you speak to your doctor and get the ok to begin an exercise routine. Keep it simple. Begin with walks, and add in some yoga poses for stretching and muscle strength. Be kind and loving with yourself. There will be days you feel like you can conquer the world, while others you will feel like five minutes in you can no longer do it. Each day will be different. Just be consistent and show up to exercise every day. It’s up to you to begin to take those baby steps and incorporate physical activity into your healing plan.

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Reference:
• Arch Intern Med. 2007;167(20):2192-2200.

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/92246670
Fibromyalgia comes with many symptoms. These include widespread pain, fatigue, muscle tenderness, and emotional distress. Treatment options vary from physical therapy to medication. Natural approaches to treating Fibromyalgia are consistently gaining more popularity. Some of these include yoga, reflexology, acupuncture, and meditation with successful results. The most simple thing that can change the way a body reacts to Fibromyalgia symptoms, however, is not in a specific treatment but much more strategic – Nutrition.

Certain foods can add elements to the system that can increase pain tolerance, reduce inflammation, stimulate energy, and reduce fatigue. Here are 5 powerful nutrition facts to incorporate into Fibromyalgia diet. Foods rich in Omega-3 Fatty acids have long been suggested for Fibromyalgia sufferers.

- With their natural anti-inflammatory properties and side effect of pain reduction, foods like salmon, flax seed and nuts are a natural choice for treating the condition. Fresh fruits and vegetables are another way to decrease inflammation. An added bonus to their anti-inflammatory properties is the natural energy boost that fruits and vegetables provide. Good fresh choices include blueberries, raspberries, spinach, celery, and broccoli.
- Commonly used to make food flavorful, ginger and garlic have long touted medicinal values. But with treating Fibromyalgia, ginger and garlic are nutritional super stars. Both respectfully possess anti-inflammatory and
antibiotic properties. Ginger and garlic also have been known to reduce pain in muscles and joints. Fatigue is one of the most chronic symptoms associated Fibromyalgia.

- Usually chronic fatigue syndrome is commonly diagnosed along with Fibromyalgia. This disorder is known to reduce energy which can have a profound effect on emotional well-being. Coconut has medium-chained fatty acids that help to sustain energy. Having more electrolytes than any sports drink and coconut water can help reduce fatigue and increase alertness.
- Whole grains are another source of energy and fuel that Fibromyalgia sufferers desperately need. The complex carbs break down slowly in the system providing sustained energy which helps battle the fatigue that goes hand in hand with Fibromyalgia. Fortified whole grain cereals, oatmeal, and wild rice are great sources of complex whole grains.
- Calcium and protein are vital for Fibromyalgia sufferers. Both provide relief from digestion problems that can be connected with the condition. Adding soy is a great source of both calcium and protein. Soy milk and edamame are both great sources for soy.

Employing the proper foods into a diet can create a natural treatment plan that can not only ease Fibromyalgia symptoms, but could help to eliminate some altogether. Fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, ginger, garlic, coconut and soy are readily available and easy to incorporate into a daily routine. Nutrition is a great starting point to naturally relieving Fibromyalgia symptoms and everything else associated with it.

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Fibromyalgia can cause widespread pain throughout the body, resulting in muscle soreness and fatigue. Even the most mundane of activities can create posture imbalances, muscle tightness, and pain. Some of the simplest undertakings such as unloading the dishwasher or vacuuming floors can cause major muscle discomfort and bring on Fibromyalgia symptoms. However, adding some simple exercises such as light free weights and aerobics can greatly improve how the body reacts to Fibromyalgia triggers.

Weight training can greatly increase muscle strength for Fibromyalgia patients. These can include simple reps with free weights, light resistance training, and modified machine work. Using light free weights, doing shoulder rolls and bicep curls increases both strength and muscle stamina. This allows the body to better perform chores that require upper body, back, and arm strength. For lower body endurance, adding ankle weights to basic walking or light jogging can help build strength and durability.

Aerobics is another way to decrease Fibromyalgia symptoms. In fact, water aerobics is often utilized to help increase strength, improve range of motion, and provide appropriate resistance for Fibromyalgia patients. Cycling, stair stepping,
and elliptical work outs are another great option for Fibromyalgia patients to increase strength and mobility.

Adding a fitness routine to a Fibromyalgia care plan also has the added benefit of helping to offset the fatigue that is often associated with the condition. Many Fibromyalgia patients are jointly diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. One popular approach to treating CFS is adding a fitness routine that includes weight training and aerobics for mild cardio elevation. The added benefit of energy from a fitness routine helps to combat fatigue and reduces Fibromyalgia symptoms.

Overall Fibromyalgia can have devastating effects on a person’s daily routine and quality of life. Adding a fitness routine can help to reduce and eliminate the symptoms that are associated with the illness. Light weight training and simple aerobics can increase strength and muscle stamina, relieve tension and stress in the body, and increase energy and flow throughout the body.

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/sheratonhotels/8482142368
Benefits to Using Reflexology for Fibromyalgia

Reflexology can have many medicinal values for numerous illnesses and conditions. With its chronic symptoms, overall pain factor, and relentless fatigue, fibromyalgia is one condition that can greatly benefit from reflexology. Here are a few benefits to using reflexology to treat Fibromyalgia.

• Improved Circulation – Reflexology has a proven history of improving circulation. With improved circulation, the overall pain that many fibromyalgia sufferers may decrease in intensity.

• Release of toxins from the system – Using reflexology can help the body to eliminate toxins from body tissues. Toxins can sometimes be the cause of chronic inflammation in muscles, joints, and tissues. Using reflexology to detox the system will naturally decrease inflammation.

• Release of muscle tension – One of the main effects of reflexology is a release of muscle tension. Using pressure points in muscles releases tension and subsequently eliminate pain that muscle tiredness that is often associated with fibromyalgia.

• Energy flow and balance – Reflexology is often used to stimulate energy and balance throughout the body. One of the biggest complaints of
Fibromyalgia sufferers is fatigue and overwhelming tiredness. Utilizing reflexology can bring natural energy to the body and help re-establish balance to an otherwise unbalanced body system.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic and debilitating disorder that can have long-term physical and mental repercussions. However, incorporating reflexology into a treatment care plan may help to lower pain, improve circulation, detox, release tension, and increase energy. Together with proper nutrition and fitness planning, fibromyalgia symptoms could be eliminated altogether.

Reference:
- altmd.com/Articles/Reflexology-for-Fibromyalgia

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/71939009
How Colon Hydrotherapy can Eliminate Fibromyalgia Symptoms

Fibromyalgia symptoms affect the whole body – overall pain, muscle fatigue, exhaustion. While studies show that a lot of the symptoms of Fibromyalgia comes from a combination of low pain threshold and inflammation, research also shows that adding a colon cleanse could significantly reduce the symptoms that are present with Fibromyalgia.

A detoxifying colon cleanse is a hydrotherapeutic therapy that uses water and pressure in the colon to cleanse the digestive track of residual waste, toxins, and allergens that can accumulate over time. This elimination is thought to reduce system inflammation and boost the immune system. Both of these results have been shown to have significant effects on Fibromyalgia symptoms. Increasing the function of the immune system helps the body fight infection and illness. Both infection and illness can be triggers for Fibromyalgia symptoms and can also aggravate the condition when symptoms are already present. Increasing the immune systems effectiveness will help to avoid these triggers and aggressors.

Removing the toxins and allergens with a colon cleanse has numerous effects that can help with Fibromyalgia symptoms. Toxins and allergens in the digestive track are thought to increase inflammation in the body by ultimately polluting the blood that circulates and inflaming everything that it circulates to. These irritants can increase muscle inflammation, stiffness, and pain that are often associated with Fibromyalgia. By removing these elements, Fibromyalgia symptoms can be greatly reduced and eliminated.
Choosing to do colon hydrotherapy is a personal choice; however there is evidence that it can greatly reduce the symptoms and onset of Fibromyalgia. Eliminating the waste, allergens, and toxins that are found in the digestive track can help reduce illness, infection, and inflammation. This reduction can ultimately result in an overall better control for Fibromyalgia and its' symptoms.

Reference:
• fibromyalgia-symptoms.org/digestive-system-cleanse.html

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/79940957@N05/8066066095/
The Ayurveda Holistic Health Movement and Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a chronic disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain with tenderness in the muscles, ligaments and joints. People with Fibromyalgia syndrome often experience a high degree of fatigue, accompanied by disturbances in sleep, memory and mood. They are also plagued by overlapping inflammatory conditions such as arthritis, lupus and digestive issues like constipation and inflammatory bowel syndrome.

Pain associated with Fibromyalgia syndrome is typically widespread, present on both sides of the body, and located above and below the waist. When diagnosing Fibromyalgia syndrome, doctors assess 18 tender points by applying firm pressure to specific areas of the body including the back of the head, top of the shoulders, between shoulder blades, front sides of the neck, upper chest, outer elbows, upper hips, sides of hips and inner knees. Patients must experience tenderness in 11 or more of 18 tender points on the body to be diagnosed with Fibromyalgia syndrome.

Although the exact cause of Fibromyalgia syndrome remains unclear, research points to neuroendocrine and neurotransmitter dysregulation, where pain becomes amplified due to the inability of the central nervous system to properly process sensory stimuli. Neurotransmitters like serotonin and substance P are partly responsible for sending the brain signals. Typically with FMS, serotonin levels are low and substance P levels are high. This results in elevated pain signals to the brain that create hypersensitive areas of tenderness and pain throughout the body, usually at the point of muscle insertion.

Western medicine has gone to great lengths to define FMS as disruptions in the aforementioned biological pathways. While this has proven quite useful in
developing therapeutic drugs to treat FMS, experts agree that there is much sufferers can do with alternative treatments to alleviate FMS pain and concomitant conditions.

The holistic Indian medical practice of Ayurveda views Fibromyalgia syndrome as primarily a nervous system disorder characterized by disturbances in the wind and space elements. When these two elements are high, the energetic force of movement called Vata destabilizes the nervous system, creating hypersensitivity and pain. The imbalances in the Vata energy combined with toxic buildup in the body from poor digestion and stress are responsible for the intense pain and chronic reoccurrence of this disorder.

**Ayurvedic Bodywork, Nutrition & Lifestyle for FMS**

Ayurveda aims to strengthen digestion, relieve FMS associated constipation, and manage the effects of chronic stress. One of the holistic ways Ayurveda can accomplish this is with a purification process called panchakarma (5 actions) and bodywork. Panchakarma includes a series of digestive aids, along with the physical manipulation of the body, to remove toxins and balance Vata energies. In particular, herbal oil massage and sudation (sweating) are used to effectively calm the nervous system, soothe sensitive skin and alleviate sore muscles and joints in FMS sufferers. Skilled staff at Ayurveda wellness centers offers this bodywork under the supervision of a certified Ayurvedic practitioner. Daily self-massage by the individual using herbal sesame oil can also improve blood circulation and break up stagnant lymph that pools throughout the body.

Suggested holistic modifications in diet and lifestyle from an Ayurvedic practitioner are very helpful for patients suffering from FMS. Paying specific attention to eating seasonal, organic, unprocessed foods and avoiding FMS triggers significantly reduces environmental toxins and digestive upset. Nutritionally, Ayurveda recommends fresh vegetable and fruit juices, cooked vegetables, soups and spices like cumin, coriander, ginger and asafetida (hing) to stimulate digestion and relieve constipation associated with FMS. Drinking naturally cooling beverages, such as coconut water and coconut milk, can reduce excess heat in the body from inflammation. Avoiding hot, spicy, fried foods, excessive tea and coffee and alcohol is also advised.

Holistic lifestyle changes include avoiding taking daytime naps or staying up late at night, exercise and reducing stressful triggers in your home and work life. Since Vata is disturbed in FMS, having a regular, structured routine with balance will ground and stabilize the mind, body and spirit. Ayurveda also suggests a holistic approach to mental and physical fitness. Try to include a gentle daily yoga practice, meditation and breath control (pranayama), all of which are known to reduce stress and calm the nervous system, into this daily routine.

**Ayurvedic Herbs & Spices for FMS**

Ayurveda views food as medicine and suggests several kitchen herbs and spices
to improve digestion, eliminate toxins and reduce the chronic pain associated with FMS. For pain and inflammation, individuals can take one half of a teaspoon or up to 500 mg of turmeric powder after each meal, per day, along with a glass of warm water. Incorporating members of the allium genus, like garlic, into meals helps to enhance immunity and detoxification. Also, using anti-inflammatory herbs and spices like ginger and chamomile in teas will help calm sore muscles and settle hypersensitive nerves.

Under the care of a certified Ayurvedic practitioner, individuals with FMS can delve further into Ayurvedic herbology to relieve their symptoms. A daily supplement of tripahala (three fruits), made of the amalaki, haritaki and bibitaki fruits, will cleanse the colon and restore much needed digestive balance. Some individuals, under the care of physician, may take licorice root to help support the endocrine system. Licorice root cannot be taken if an individual has hypertension, heart conditions, pregnancy, diabetes, hypokalemia, or low potassium, kidney disease, liver disease, erectile dysfunction, hormone-sensitive cancers, breast and prostate malignancies, so a physician's approval is highly advised.

Lastly, certain tree resins called guggulus are very useful in treating joint pain and inflammation and a combination of ten herbs called dashmoola specifically targets Vata energies. Both may be recommended to FMS sufferers by certified Ayurvedic practitioners.

By: Julie A. Cerrato, PhD AP CYT CAT

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Controlling Fibromyalgia with Hydrotherapy and Massage

Hydrotherapy has long been known for its healing powers and therapeutic attributes when utilized as a treatment for chronic illness. One illness that is profoundly affected by adding hydrotherapy and massage is Fibromyalgia. Using the techniques of hydrotherapy bath and the incorporation of massage therapy can greatly reduce the common symptoms that are brought on with Fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia is a condition most well-known for an overall feeling of pain and fatigue to the body. It is characterized by trigger points such as joints and muscle stiffness accompanied with physical and emotional fatigue. Utilizing hydrotherapy bath that has a warm temperature between 91° and 94° Fahrenheit can stimulate muscle and joint relaxation while improving circulation throughout the body. This consistent motion of circulation with relaxation will help with the mobilization of Fibromyalgia trigger points and decrease overall pain that is felt.

In conjunction with hydrotherapeutic bath, massage can add another level of comfort for those suffering from Fibromyalgia. Massage uses pressure on the muscles to stimulate blood flow and encourage relaxation. While this can help with the pain and discomfort often felt with Fibromyalgia, the real benefit to massage is the emotional release that it can provide to help alleviate the mental fatigue that the syndrome has on the body.

Fibromyalgia affects the body both physically and mentally from the constant battle with chronic pain and fatigue. Hydrotherapy and massage together can create an ongoing treatment that can help with muscle relaxation, joint stiffness, overall achiness, and circulation. The two therapies can also help to balance the emotional fatigue by encouraging the body and mind to relax and unwind to promote better management of the syndrome.
Using Your Senses to Better Sleep and Reduced Pain in Fibromyalgia

One of the biggest complaints that those with Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) mention is an inability to get a good night’s sleep. Both the quality and quantity of sleep can be affected and they can awaken in the morning feeling just as tired, if not more than when they “tried” to sleep. If pain and depression often accompany sleep problems in FMS, adding aromatherapy and music to your nighttime sleep regimen at night could be considered. It is very likely that the two together may be more beneficial than using either modality separately.

The essential oils, especially lavender oil, have been studied suggests that essential oils have many benefits including reducing pain and helping to achieve a better night’s sleep. Lavender oil also has anti-inflammatory properties. The use of the essential oils in promoting the quality of sleep has demonstrated success in research of hospitalized patients.

In one study, approximately seventy women aged 45-55 with insomnia were randomized into two groups - one that received lavender therapy and one that did not. The women in this trial who received inhalations of lavender twice per week reported a significant increase in sleep quality. Lavender aromatherapy was also found to have a positive effect on decreasing the heart rate after one month and three months of therapy. Why is this important? Because the hallmark of a good night’s sleep is that the body “slows down,” including a reduction in heart rate and blood pressure.

In another study whose focus was examining the effect of music on pain in those with fibromyalgia, it was found that those who listened to music once a day for four weeks in total reported a significant decrease in pain and depression when compared to those who did not.
While each therapy separately demonstrated a positive benefit, another study showed that the combination of music therapy and aromatherapy in addition to touch therapy, was beneficial in helping patients get a good night’s sleep.

What can we draw from this information? Well, if you have fibromyalgia, understand that you will likely need a multifaceted approach to help you achieve a good night’s sleep. This combination approach is likely to be more successful than an individual therapy alone. It may include listening to soothing music before and while you are sleeping, permeating your room with the relaxing aroma of lavender oil, feeling the endearing touch a loved one. This is saying that the treatment of fibromyalgia involves the use of all of our senses. We need to pay attention to all of them in order to promote successful healing.

By: Dr. Rich Snyder, DO

References:

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/mydecorative/9041888546
Fibromyalgia is a medical condition characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain, tender joints and chronic fatigue. Fibromyalgia can be mild or severe, sporadic or chronic and has no known cure. Medications are available to reduce the pain of Fibromyalgia, but do not eliminate the pain completely. In addition, these medications often have side effects. One particular side effect being the havoc they wreak on the intestinal tract, causing an overgrowth of Candida which may lead to “leaky gut syndrome.”

Lifestyle changes are key when living with Fibromyalgia in order to identify triggers and control the symptoms. Even those living with the most chronic and debilitating type of Fibromyalgia can alleviate the two most severe symptoms - chronic pain and fatigue - by adopting lifestyle changes with or without the use of medication. Along with adequate sleep, exercise, and stress management, nutritional changes make a huge impact on pain management and quality of life.

Nutrition is an important component to any healthy, balanced lifestyle. For those who live with Fibromyalgia, a healthy diet is even more important. Nutrition is more than just eating your fruits and veggies. Nutrition also refers to the avoidance of highly-processed foods. Scientific research is limited on the relationship between nutrition/diet and Fibromyalgia; many cases show that people experience a decrease in symptoms when highly processed food, caffeine, alcohol, red meat, refined sugar and fried food are removed from their diet.
Several foods should be avoided when trying to reduce Fibromyalgia symptoms, as recommended by experts Mary Moeller and Joe Elrod. These food categories include:

- High fat dairy food
- Refined (white) sugars
- White flour
- Fried foods
- Preservatives and additives
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Junk food
- High salt foods
- Red meat Meats preserved by being smoked cured or nitrate cured, such as lunch meats
- Coffee and caffeine
- Sodas and carbonated beverages
- Aspartame and all other artificial sweeteners
- MSG (monosodium glutamate)

In addition, it is recommended that alcohol and tobacco products (including second-hand smoke) be completely avoided. Simple carbohydrates are linked to the “bad bacteria” found in the large intestines. Therefore, simple carbohydrates should be either eliminated or kept at a minimum.

What can you eat? If you are trying to control your Fibromyalgia, limited studies and anecdotal data suggest that eating foods rich in the following vitamins and minerals relieve Fibromyalgia pain: Vitamins A, C, D, E, magnesium, selenium, zinc and Omega 3 fatty acid. Also include high fiber food and foods rich in antioxidants in your diet. Use a quality nutritional supplement and also be sure to drink plenty of water - approximately 8 ounces a day.

Working with a nutritionist to meet your individual needs is strongly recommended since every case of Fibromyalgia is as individualized as we are.

Fibromyalgia has no known cause or cure, but avoidance of highly-processed food and adopting a nutritionally-sound diet has resulted in less pain, an increased energy level and greater overall quality of life for those living with this condition.

Reference:

- The Fibromyalgia Nutrition Guide by Mary Moeller and Joe Elrod
- National Fibromyalgia Research Association nfra.net

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/free-stock/6827885818/
How to Use Your Local Farmers Market to Treat Fibromyalgia, Osteoarthritis, and Migraines

It is no secret that diet plays a large role in treating many different types of conditions. But in the spring and summer months there is plethora of medicinal treatment options set up at little tables in communities all across the county – Farmers Markets. Farmers markets are the off-shoot of nature’s bounty providing a virtual organic pharmacy disguised by sweet, fresh, and delicious produce. Here are some farmer’s market gems for treatment of Fibromyalgia, Osteoarthritis, and Migraines.

Fibromyalgia
• Cherries and Raspberries – Having strong anti-inflammatory values, most red fruits can have a stronger pain and inflammation reduction value that is ten times the average aspirin treatment. Recent studies have also shown that tart cherries can also help with sleep problems that are often associated with Fibromyalgia.
• Cantaloupe, Watermelon, Broccoli, Collard Greens, and Kale – The local farmer’s market favorites are proven alkaline forming foods. Adding these to a Fibromyalgia diet can also reduce inflammation and help to combat
the symptoms of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome which is commonly diagnosed as a co-morbidity with Fibromyalgia.

Osteoarthritis

- Strawberries, Bell Peppers, and Cauliflower - High in vitamin C and absolute staples to get from any farmers market, produce power houses provide a healthy dose of vitamin C which is vital in the formation of both collagen and proteoglycans.
- Spinach, Pumpkin, Tomatoes, and Carrots – These market gems are high in beta-carotene. Beta-carotene is strong antioxidant that helps reduce the progression of Osteoarthritis.

Migraines

- Spinach – Especially when eaten raw, spinach contains high levels of vitamin B-12 which is often prescribed as a supplement to help combat migraine pain.
- Green Beans, Kale, and other leafy greens – These green veggies are high in magnesium, a powerful element that can help reduce tension in muscles as well as help the reaction of nerve and muscles cells.

Whether it’s just to help local economy or a conscious effort to bring more fruits and vegetables into your diet, visiting your local farmer’s market can provide relief for many conditions including Fibromyalgia, Osteoarthritis, and Migraines. Just by its nature of getting a person outside and moving, a farmer’s market can provide exercise, fresh air, and the added bonus of a growing 'pharmacy' to treat chronic pain conditions.

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/29233640@N07/9223899743
ADHD and its cousin condition ADD have well known symptoms such as lack of focus, confusion, lack of clarity, and an inability to follow directions. Remarkably, the symptoms commonly associated with Fibromyalgia are almost identical to those in ADD/ADHD. What's the connection? When diagnosing chronic disorders in children, oftentimes, these two symptoms are misdiagnosed with one another.

The biggest issue when trying to diagnose between Fibromyalgia and ADD/ADHD is the presence or absence of pain. However, most children translate pain in ways that adults don't. With both disorders exhibiting similar neurological symptoms without the specific complaint of pain throughout portions of the body, Fibromyalgia can be mistaken for ADD/ADHD.

Another pain issue between the two is diagnosing between headaches – another symptom commonly associated with both disorders. For children diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, headaches are usually attributed to stress and “overworking” of the brain to try to focus and compute information. Fibromyalgia patients experience headaches as well, but are usually attributed to nervous system translation and over-stimulated nerves. Unfortunately, for children, it’s hard to determine what kind of headache they are experiencing and the intensity of that headache. In fact, both conditions are often associated with migraines – a condition that affects thousands of children every year.

When diagnosing either ADD/ADHD or Fibromyalgia, pain is used as an indicator to differentiate the two. However, with most children pain is translated loosely. For example, many children that are struggling to maintain focus during school as with ADD/ADHD will feel stress in the form of a stomach ache or even joint pain. Whereas, a child that feels fatigued or in overall pain from Fibromyalgia may show signs of irritability, lack of concentration, and an inability to complete tasks. For obvious reasons, these two conditions are very similar in neurological symptoms.

Avoiding a misdiagnosis is difficult, but not impossible. The best approach is to
utilize the services of a medical pediatric psychiatrist. This is the best qualified person to determine true pain symptoms through a child’s expressions. Working together with a pediatrician and a psychiatrist can offer the best hope for an accurate diagnosis of either ADD/ADHD or Fibromyalgia. It is also important to continue follow up care and subsequent therapies to monitor if there is any improvement. This ensures that the appropriate care plan is being employed.

At home to treat either condition, techniques like home organization, nutritional guidance, and systematic routine can often provide emotional and physical relief to both ADD/ADHD and Fibromyalgia patients. Hormones, preservatives, and food dyes have been shown to have profound effects both behaviorally and physical for both disorders. Incorporating a whole diet rich in Omege-3 fatty acids and high in magnesium helps with symptoms such as focus, irritability, pain, migraines, and fatigue. Organization and structure provide a consistent environment that reduces stress and irritability – both triggers for ADD/ADHD and Fibromyalgia.

Dealing with childhood ADD/ADHD or Fibromyalgia can be difficult. However, the most important part of the process is getting an accurate diagnosis and treating the right condition. Both have similar symptoms that are easily mistaken for the other. With some professional guidance and some minor changes at home, a child suffering from either can be successfully treated for either ADD/ADHD or Fibromyalgia and have a full and happy childhood.

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/lifementalhealthpics/8384491985
Could a Thyroid Disorder Be Contributing to Your Fibromyalgia Symptoms?

Our bodies are geared towards balance, or homeostasis. Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) represents a condition where our bodies are significantly out of balance. A holistic approach examines all of the body’s systems, as abnormal functioning of one or more of these body systems can contribute to FMS. A vital organ whose function should be further evaluated in anyone with FMS is the thyroid gland.

Millions of Americans are affected with a condition called hypothyroidism, which is an under-functioning of the thyroid gland. The most common cause of an under-functioning thyroid gland is due to a condition called Hashimoto’s thyroiditis. This autoimmune condition most commonly seen in women causes antibodies to be produced that can destroy the thyroid gland over time. In particular Hashimoto’s thyroiditis is associated with certain antibody tests as measured on blood work, including anti-thyroid peroxidase antibodies (anti-TPO) and anti-thyroglobulin antibodies. Research suggests that these antibody tests - if positive - can increase the risk of developing other inflammatory conditions, especially FMS.

In one study, forty six people that were diagnosed with Hashimoto’s thyroiditis also tested positive for these antibodies. Of those approximately sixty percent of them were also diagnosed as having Fibromyalgia syndrome. What can we deduce from this study? If you are diagnosed with fibromyalgia syndrome,
strongly consider having your thyroid function tests checked, and insist on having the above antibody tests checked. The data suggests that you may be at higher risk of developing FMS.

What can you do to optimize your thyroid function? First, be sure that you include iodine in your diet. As a nation, it is likely that millions of us are iodine deficient. Iodine is crucial for optimal thyroid function. Another trace mineral that you need to incorporate into your treatment regimen is Selenium. Both are important for optimal thyroid function.

In addition, if you are diagnosed with Hashimoto’s thyroid disease, especially if the above antibody tests are positive, also consider eliminating gluten from your diet. There is a connection between gluten and autoimmune thyroid disease. In one study, a random group previously diagnosed with Hashimoto’s thyroiditis underwent biopsy of their small intestine to evaluate for possible gluten sensitivity. Approximately fifty percent of those who underwent biopsies demonstrated increased activity of their immune system which was attributed to be due to gluten. In another study from the Netherlands, the authors established a connection with Hashimoto’s thyroiditis and celiac disease and recommended screening those diagnosed with autoimmune thyroid disease for celiac disease.

The holistic treatment of fibromyalgia should not just be geared towards the mitigation of symptoms. We must remind ourselves that our body is interconnected and the goal of healing becomes of restoration of our whole body back into balance. As this article points out, a close look at the thyroid is important.

By: Dr. Rich Snyder, DO

References:

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/86530412@N02/7953227784
Controlling Fibromyalgia Pain During Pregnancy

Do you have fibromyalgia? Are you thinking about becoming pregnant? If you have fibromyalgia and are planning on becoming pregnant, then you need to develop a detailed and personalized plan with your healthcare practitioner(s) before you decide to move forward. One of the biggest symptoms that women can experience during their pregnancy is worsening fibromyalgia symptoms and this article will provide some suggestions in coping with the pain associated with it.

In one study, 26 women who met the criteria for fibromyalgia were followed during their pregnancy. They reported worsening pain during their pregnancy. In particular, they felt that during the third trimester the pain was worse compared to the other trimesters.

Were you aware that even women who have never been diagnosed with fibromyalgia can experience fibromyalgia-like symptoms during their pregnancy? In another study, 100 women who were not diagnosed with fibromyalgia and were pregnant were followed during their pregnancy. Approximately twenty-five percent of the women reported having several fibromyalgia-like symptoms, especially near term.

As you may be aware, a woman's physiology changes during pregnancy. The “supporting ligaments” in the pelvis are more relaxed (in part due to a hormone called relaxin). There are changes to the overall body mechanics due to
pregnancy that can also alter your structural alignment. This is the cause of worsening pain for fibromyalgia patients, including to the back and the pelvis.

What can you do to help minimize the fibromyalgia symptoms during your pregnancy? Again, proper planning is important. One recommendation is enlisting the aid of an osteopathic physician skilled in osteopathic manipulative therapy, or OMT, for short. Studies have demonstrated that OMT can help not only relieve back pain (especially in the third trimester) but also pelvic pain, both of which can be worse especially in the latter trimester. It is likely that as you proceed through your trimesters you will require more frequent sessions with an OMT specialist to keep your body in structural balance.

In addition to the OMT specialist who can really help with pain and discomfort in the back and pelvis, consider the addition of a reflexologist. A good reflexologist can help you decrease the severity of the pain in those “tender points” that are associated with fibromyalgia. One study demonstrated that weekly reflexology sessions can in fact decrease the severity of pain in highly prevalent areas including the arms, neck, and head.

For those areas that are still causing you some pain, consider the use of acupuncture, which is especially effective at reducing the pain of those “tender points” seen with fibromyalgia. If you are averse to “needles” then consider adding acupressure to your regimen.

Can yoga be performed safely during pregnancy? Yes, but of course it will need to be modified because of your pregnancy, but it can help you with your pain. A study from the Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine demonstrated that yoga was more effective than simple posture based exercises at reducing low back and pelvic pain.

Concerning the use of natural supplements or herbal remedies to relieve pain during pregnancy, the use of many are contraindicated during pregnancy. When using natural supplements at higher than low levels, you need to be careful. I tend to advocate for the above therapies to help with pain; I believe that a combination of therapies, including OMT and reflexology, complement each other very well.

Dr. Rich Snyder, DO

References:

- Martins RF, Pinto E Silva JL. “Treatment of Pregnancy-Related Lumbar


Photo Credit: thepregnancyzone.com
Structural Integration for Treatment of Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a syndrome characterized by “long-term, body-wide pain and tenderness in the joints, muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. It also has been linked to prolonged or chronic bouts of fatigue, sleep problems, depression, anxiety, and headaches.” Fibromyalgia is a diagnostic term created to objectively define symptoms but each person experiences this syndrome quite differently. The cause of Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) remains unclear without any stout and effective solutions. Therefore, the efficacy of existing therapies varies widely from person to person.

The role of connective tissue, specifically fascia, can contribute to relieving the chronic pain and tenderness in the entire body. Our fascial system dutifully locks in our outward appearance and shape. It is believed that FMS is triggered by physical and/or emotional trauma, and in turn, causes structural imbalances due to the chronic pain felt in various parts of the body. Structural Integration is
beneficial in slowly realigning these structural imbalances at a depth and speed the client is comfortable with.

FMS clients experience a plethora of tender points along the body and feel pain in the joints. It is highly important for a Structural Integrator to work fascial planes at a slow pace while simultaneously treating localized pain sites and aligning the whole body as one unit all at once. As a rule of thumb, working cautiously and lightly on the client’s tissue is significant for pain relief. Being open to the results is advised, as response to deep tissue treatment is often highly unique to the individual. FMS clients can be more susceptible to flare-ups, so a lighter touch will often feel significantly deep enough for the client. Generally, I will suggest NOT to participate in any extraneous stretching and exercise that would cause extra soreness 24 hours after his/her session.

It is believed that the issue is related to the nervous system, and not so much in the fascial tissue system and that Structural Integrators (aka Rolfers) are known to especially manipulate, lengthen, and reorganize. I find that it is helpful to calm and detune the nervous system into parasympathetic (rest and digest) ease. Once anxiety wanes, the body will be more receptive to deep tissue work. Usually, as the client progresses through the series, the body is ready for deeper work.

I always recommend an integrative approach for a client, which entails paying attention to and investing the time into determining what the possible root cause of their disease might be. The healing process for the client requires that he/she find relief and support from many arenas such as nutrition, stress management, counseling, homeopathy, craniosacral therapy, lifestyle changes, and perseverance. The beauty in the difficulty experienced is an opportunity for great self-growth and discovery. The Rolf Method of Structural Integration contributes structural and functional optimization, increased body awareness, and the space to ground and relax the overstimulated mind and body of a FMS client.

By Minki Kim, Structural Integration Professional & WholesomeOne Health Advisor

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/cosmic_bandita/1145076265/
Studies tout the energy boost D-ribose provides people suffering from fibromyalgia.

D-ribose, also called ribose or Beta-D-ribofuranose, is a type of sugar that your body produces naturally.

- D-ribose increases the energy to all of the cells of the body, especially the muscle cells. Supplementing with D-ribose can provide your heart with the energy boost that it needs.
- D-ribose commonly comes in capsule or powdered form. The powdered form is preferred as you can add it to your morning drink.
- The recommended starting dose is 2500 mg. Increase by 2500 mg every few weeks to reach a maximum dose of 10,000 mg.
- Even though ribose is a “sugar” it will not raise blood glucose levels. Higher doses than 10,000 mg can cause diarrheal symptoms in some people.

Information provided by Rich Snyder, DO

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- Lucas HJ, Brauch CM et al. “Fibromyalgia--new concepts of pathogenesis and treatment.” International Journal of Immunopathology and
Helping Your Muscles with Magnesium

For the more than six million people who have been diagnosed with Fibromyalgia, supplementation with magnesium may help decrease pain and improve muscle strength and endurance. Studies have demonstrated that those diagnosed with Fibromyalgia often have lower levels of magnesium when compared to the rest of the population. Increasing your magnesium intake should be considered as part of your treatment armamentarium.

Magnesium is a mineral found in the cells of your body and is part of the energy mechanism that keeps your muscle cells running smoothly. It can also be found in your bones and is so important for maintaining bone health. Did you know that magnesium is needed for over two hundred chemical reactions in the human body? Without magnesium your intestine does not absorb nutrients as well. Low magnesium levels can also affect the absorption of other important minerals, such as potassium and calcium.
Magnesium is crucial for maintaining muscle strength and endurance. Because it dilates blood vessels, it improves blood flow to the muscles which is important not only for muscle health but also toxin removal. Low magnesium levels also increase total body inflammation; in fibromyalgia, the goal is to lower the total body inflammatory load. Magnesium also helps to relieve pain: it helps to decrease the pain sensitivity associated with fibromyalgia.

How do you know if your magnesium levels are low? Well, the most common way that magnesium levels are measured is by a simple blood test. Be aware that the magnesium level that is measured in the blood may not accurately reflect the levels of magnesium in the cell. That being said, other tests used to measure magnesium are more cumbersome and there are questions concerning their reliability.

On routine blood work, most “normal” reference ranges of magnesium are from 1.6-2.6 mg/dL. Note that there is a significant difference between the reference ranges. The goal of treatment is to get the magnesium levels in the blood in the higher range.

How much magnesium should you take? In general it is recommended that you take at least 600 - 800 mg of magnesium a day. Great dietary sources of magnesium include green leafy vegetables, seeds (sunflower and sesame for example), and nuts (almonds and Brazil nuts for example). If you are on a typical Western diet that is low in magnesium, you may need to take a magnesium supplement.

What form of magnesium should you take? Be aware that not all magnesium is created the same. You want to pick a formulation that is highly absorbed by the body. Chelated magnesium is a form of magnesium without the heavy metals. Magnesium malate, a combination of magnesium and malic acid is a form of magnesium that may provide more benefit for those with fibromyalgia. In one study, a combination of magnesium and malic acid not only reduced pain and tenderness, but was also reported to improve a person’s functional status.

Be aware that for some people taking magnesium orally, it can cause intestinal upset, including diarrhea. The use of a magnesium oil and/or magnesium gel when topically applied to the arms or legs daily can help normalize your magnesium levels and get you on the road to recovery.

By: Dr. Rich Snyder

References:
- Kim YS, Kim KM et al. “Women with fibromyalgia have lower levels of calcium, magnesium, iron and manganese in hair mineral analysis.”


Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/66219420
Children require more sleep than any adult. It is when they grow, when they decompress, and when fuel up for another day of development. However, for some children sleep isn't just vital for proper growth and function – it's necessary to keep chronic childhood conditions from flaring up.

Many common conditions have multiple care plans to try to combat their symptoms. With children, however, it is always best to try to find the most organic form of therapy. An average child requires anywhere from 8 to 12 hours of sleep a night to function properly. For children with chronic conditions such as migraines or Fibromyalgia, they would most likely benefit with more sleep.

Sleep produces serotonin. Serotonin is a vital neurotransmitter for the brain. When there is a significant drop in serotonin, the blood vessels in the brain and other parts of the body swell as a reaction to the lack of hormone. As a result, migraine symptoms increase dramatically. Basically, the serotonin levels stop the brain from transmitting the signal to feel pain and subsequently the blood vessels do not respond by swelling.

Another issue with sleep deficit and chronic conditions is that it can create symptoms that are similar to other conditions. Many children are diagnosed with ADHD or ADD because of symptoms that are similar to Fibromyalgia. More specifically, Fibromyalgia has a common symptom known as brain fog. It is described as a lack of focus, inattentiveness, irritability, and overall fatigue.
These are symptoms that are remarkably similar to those of ADHD and ADD.

Having a sleep deficit can greatly aggravate Fibromyalgia brain fog and can be misdiagnosed as a psycho-neurological disorder. What this leads to is an inappropriate treatment plan and often times an unsuccessful treatment result. Imagine what treating a child with a Ritalin derivative would do when the accurate approach would have been to treat chronic fatigue syndrome that often presents itself with Fibromyalgia.

It may be difficult to incorporate a strong sleep pattern in some children, especially those that struggle with certain chronic disorders; however there are some natural approaches that can render success. Melatonin in small doses has shown to be very effective to help children fall asleep and sleep more soundly. Other children benefit from a strong bedtime routine that includes meditation and low stimulation. The bottom line is that all children need adequate sleep. Children that have underlying chronic conditions not only need more sleep to thrive, they need it to remain successful in their treatment plan for migraines and Fibromyalgia.

Reference:
- uwconsult.netreturns.biz/LocalStories/Story.aspx?StoryID=d2460dee-150b-4fd7-9346-a10a0553d5d7#.UdGWR_nlbQg

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/s_evenseth/3910764804
Enzyme Therapy – A Natural Approach to Treating Chronic Conditions

Enzyme therapy is a form of therapy that uses supplemental enzymes to replace those lost during the cooking process of foods. Essentially, everything that we eat has a certain type and level of enzymes that help specific functions of the body. In fact, most of the vitamins and mineral supplements that we consume would not be absorbed by the body without proper enzyme consumption.

Employing an enzyme regiment can be used in conjunction with a supplementation system when trying to treat many chronic conditions. For example, a person that suffers from Fibromyalgia or chronic migraines may find relief by adding CoEnzymeQ-10. This particular enzyme supplement can help with circulation, inflammation, and pain. It is a natural antioxidant that plays a large role in oxygen utilization and energy production. Specifically for Fibromyalgia, CoEnzymeQ-10 can be especially successful in treating the chronic fatigue that is usually associated with the condition.

Serratia Peptidase is another popular enzyme that can help with chronic conditions. It is touted for offering huge anti-inflammatory properties. It also helps reduce pain, swelling, and fluid retention. These qualities make Serratia Peptidase a good choice when treating Osteoarthritis and Fibromyalgia. Reducing swelling and inflammation in the body is the best way to treat the symptoms associated with both of those conditions.

It is important to speak with a physician or pharmacist about drug interactions...
and dosage, but you can also introduce more enzymes with a change in nutritional lifestyle. Cooking foods above 118°F can actually destroy most enzymes that are vital for health. Keeping as many foods raw as you can will help to keep vital enzymes intact. Fruits and vegetables, especially leafy greens, can be excellent sources of naturally occurring enzymes. These enzymes are essential for everyday bodily function and balance including digestion, vitamin secretion, and hormone production. They are also valuable for treating today’s most common chronic conditions like migraines, Fibromyalgia, and Osteoarthritis.

Reference:
  • health2us.com/enzyme.htm

Photo Credit: flickr.com/photos/superfantastic/4016241122/
Developing a Holistic Treatment Plan for Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS)

The treatment of Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) involves an integrative treatment plan that involves treating mind, body, and spirit. Only using prescription medications is simply not enough for the treatment of this condition. The treatment plan includes correcting nutrient deficiencies, treating pain and inflammation, searching for underlying causes of FMS, evaluating for hormonal imbalance, as well as treating the person so she can get a good night’s rest.

Getting a Holistic Based Evaluation

If you have fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS), you need a detailed and personalized evaluation. This means looking for and identifying any causes of inflammation and potential infections, including Lyme disease. In addition, you should ask your healthcare provider about the following:
- **Hormonal Analysis:** Fibromyalgia can be associated with many hormonal imbalances, including decreased levels of the hormones by the adrenal gland (adrenal fatigue). These can include sex hormones. Low hormone levels can also contribute to fatigue and insomnia among others.
- The testing mentioned above is a combination of blood, urine, and saliva testing.
- Testing for nutrient deficiencies and toxicities: There are some personalized profiles, including hair analysis that should be considered.

**Nutritional Recommendations**

Forming a solid nutritional plan is vital as those with FMS may be nutrient-depleted. The pain can be so debilitating that one may not feel like eating. It can be very difficult to eat three meals a day. If the food that one is eating is low in nutritional value and is high in Omega 6 content, this can promote further inflammation and pain. Without proper nutrition, your body will not be able to heal. Modifying your diet and supplementation of the correct nutrient deficiencies are key in the treatment of FMS. Your diet should have high antioxidant and high nutritional value.

**Anti-Inflammatory Diet**

A diet that is plant-based in nature and emphasizes fruits and vegetables and whole grains is necessary in the treatment of fibromyalgia. You want to as much as possible eliminate refined foods from your diet. Be aware of any food sensitivities that you may have that can exacerbate underlying inflammation and pain. Any food has the ability to stimulate an inflammatory response. One of the most common examples of this is gluten in celiac disease. On an anti-inflammatory diet, all possible sources of food sensitivities are eliminated and then reintroduced one at a time.

- Another way is to have your blood tested for food sensitivities.
- Be aware that different foods, even among fruits and vegetables, can have different degrees of inflammation. There is a great site at www.nutritiondata.com that has an inflammatory index that can tell you the inflammatory power of the foods that you are eating. You want to focus on foods that have a high anti-inflammatory index.

**Other Nutritional Recommendations:**

- Stay away from sugar: Sugar can be a potent source of inflammation. Eliminate this from your diet, and you can see a change in how you feel as well. Sugar can also promote Candida overgrowth in the intestine which stimulates an inflammatory response via mycotoxins.
- **Juicing** in the morning is a great way to start the morning and get a great anti-oxidant kick to start your day.
Promoting Intestinal Health

You read about the connection between Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) and Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS). Maintaining a healthy intestinal tract reduces total body inflammation and is very important in the treatment of FMS. This aspect in the treatment of FMS is not emphasized enough. The microflora of the intestinal tract plays such an important role in the modulation of the immune system. Altered gut flora can play a major role in your ability to absorb nutrients, and it can contribute to fungal overgrowth.

**Probiotics:** These should be a mainstay in any inflammatory condition. They can normalize the bowel flora and replace the bad bacteria with the good intestinal microflora. Studies specific to their benefits in FMS have been mixed, but they do have an effect on immune system modulation and are often included in any anti-inflammatory regimen. In one review article from the Journal of Clinical Gastroenterology, the use of probiotics provided adequate relief in the treatment of diarrhea-predominant IBS.

**Digestive enzymes:** Consider the use digestive enzymes to help digest food completely which helps in absorption. The ability to maximally absorb nutrients can be affected in those with chronic inflammation.

**Fiber:** Don’t forget the importance of including fiber in your nutrition program. Not only is it vital for overall bowel health but it can also “bind up” toxins in the intestine and help eliminate them from the body.

Supplementing Naturally

There are different supplements that have a role in the treatment of Fibromyalgia Syndrome. Supplements can help increase energy to the cell and the body, reduce pain and inflammation, help you get a good night’s sleep, and provide nutritional value.

Supplements that Boost Energy to the Cell

**D-ribose:** There are studies concerning fibromyalgia that tout the energy boost of D-ribose. D-ribose increases the energy to all of the cells of the body, especially the muscle cells. Supplementing with D-ribose can provide your heart with the energy boost that it needs.

- D-ribose commonly comes in capsule or powdered form. The powdered form is preferred as you can add it to your morning drink.
- The recommended starting dose is 2500 mg. Increase by 2500 mg every few weeks to reach a maximum dose of 10,000 mg.
Even though ribose is a “sugar” it will not raise blood glucose levels. Higher doses than 10,000 mg can cause diarrheal symptoms in some people.

**Coenzyme Q10 (Ubiquinone):** Replacement of this antioxidant can help improve fibromyalgia symptoms. It has been reported that those with fibromyalgia as well as other chronic illnesses can have lower than normal levels of ubiquinone in the body.

- Begin with low doses at 50-100 mg daily and increase to twice a day after several weeks. Smaller doses taken during the day maximizes its absorption.
- As ubiquinone can lower blood pressure, you need to closely monitor your blood pressure. If you have diabetes, monitor your blood glucose levels as ubiquinone can lower blood glucose levels as well.

**Supplements that Help Boost Nutrition**

**Magnesium:** The role of low magnesium levels in the body and its importance in inflammation, pain, and fatigue is being researched. In one review article, the authors noted lower levels of zinc and magnesium than in the control groups. Magnesium supplementation is necessary to help counteract the fatigue and pain associated with fibromyalgia. Certain medications, such as diuretics, can lower your magnesium levels. There are several ways to increase your magnesium intake:

- Increase the amount of leafy green vegetables, seeds (sunflower and sesame for example) and nuts (almonds and Brazil nuts for example) which contain a lot of magnesium. You should strive to at least consume 600-800 mg a day.
- If needed, magnesium can also be supplemented either orally or in a gel or oil formulation applied directly to the skin. Chelated magnesium is a form of magnesium taken orally without the heavy metals. This can be started once a day and increased to twice a day for a total dose of 400-600 mg. Note that very high doses of magnesium can cause diarrhea. Magnesium Malate is a form of magnesium that is very well absorbed.
- An alternative is to apply Magnesium gel or oil to your skin once or twice daily. If you have been told that you have kidney problems, you may need to have blood levels of your magnesium level followed and limit your magnesium intake.

**Vitamin D:** The role of Vitamin D deficiency in the development of fibromyalgia is being evaluated; however, in one research article it was noted that in evaluating over seventy-five patients who had been diagnosed with fibromyalgia, over two-thirds had low or low-normal Vitamin D levels. The authors of this study also noted that occurred very frequently in those patients with depression and anxiety.
Don't forget that Vitamin D supplementation is vital for your overall bone and muscle health.

- Ask your healthcare provider to measure a Vitamin D level, which is a simple blood test.
- Begin Vitamin D3 at 1000 Units daily with food. Because it is a fat soluble vitamin, it is better absorbed with food.

**Vitamin C:** Remember that Vitamin C is an antioxidant; in terms of cellular health, because it is an electron donor, it helps to reduce oxidative stress and keep the cells in a reduced or natural state. We think that supplementation with Vitamin C may be beneficial. In one small study, 12 individuals with fibromyalgia were given a combination of 100 mg of Vitamin C and broccoli powder. They were closely followed over a period of one month. By the end of the month the participants in the trial reported an improved quality of life and reduced sensitivity to pain. Deficiency of this vitamin can directly impact adrenal health, and FMS can cause a lot of stress on the adrenal glands and is strongly associated with the development of adrenal fatigue, which is strongly associated with Fibromyalgia Syndrome.

- The ester form of Vitamin C is better absorbed than other formulations.
- Vitamin C at a dose of 2000 mg a day is a good starting dose.

**Supplements that Relieve Pain and Inflammation**

**Bioflavonoids:** Good antioxidant support is vital in the treatment of Fibromyalgia. Bioflavonoids are excellent antioxidants that can relieve pain and inflammation. Bioflavonoids that have been studied in the treatment of fibromyalgia include turmeric and quercetin. Quercetin may be especially effective as it has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-allergenic properties.

- Turmeric can be taken as a 400 mg capsule daily or as a powder that can be sprinkled on each meal.
- Quercetin can be taken as a capsule. Usual starting dose is 500 mg a day.

**Wobenzym N:** This is an enzyme supplement that is used in the treatment of inflammation and pain. Enzymes in this supplement include bromelain (from pineapple) and papain (from papaya).

- If you have allergies to pineapples or papaya, do not take this supplement.
- It is best taken on an empty stomach; be aware that you may need to take 6-12 tablets a day for an inflammatory response.

**Morinda citrifolia (Noni):** This is a tropical plant from East Asia that has been
used for many years. It has anti-inflammatory properties and can help in the treatment of pain.

- Noni can come in capsule or juice form. If you take the juice form, begin at 1 ounce twice a day and increase slowly to 4-6 oz a day.
- Some forms of Noni can have a high potassium content so if you have kidney disease you need to be mindful of this.
- Extremely high doses of this may have an adverse effect on the liver, although this is controversial. The several ounces a day that we mention here is very low dosage of this supplement.

**Supplements That Can Help You Get a Good Night’s Sleep**

**Melatonin:** Melatonin is a natural hormone that is helpful in helping you achieve a good night’s sleep. In those with FMS, one research article points out that melatonin levels are lower at night when sleeping compared to someone who does not have fibromyalgia. Supplementation with melatonin may also help pain in addition to improving the quality of sleep.

- Start at low doses of 1-2 mg each night before going to sleep each night and increase slowly.

**Valerian root:** This is an herb that can help you get a good night’s rest. There have been several studies examining the efficacy of valerian root in the treatment of insomnia. In one review, the authors concluded that while further study was needed, valerian root seemed to able to improve the quality of sleep without experiencing any significant side effects.

**Carefully Developing an Exercise Program**

You need to be very careful when designing an exercise program. Strenuous activity and/or high intensity exercise can actually be counterproductive in someone with fibromyalgia. This does not mean that you will not be able to tolerate any and all exercise regimens. It means that you need to be careful, start slowly, and find out what your own limits are and increase very slowly and carefully. Meditative-based exercises can be very beneficial for someone with fibromyalgia.

- **Yoga:** Yoga is a great way to increase muscle endurance and flexibility. It is important to start slowly and work with a certified instructor to learn the right way to do each exercise. Yoga is especially effective if started in the early stages of this condition.
- **Tai chi** is another great meditative-based exercise that should be incorporated into your regimen.
- **Muscle Resistance Training:** Whether you are using free weights or
machines, you need to start with very low weight and lower repetitions. You need to know your limits. A good rule of thumb is to exercise until you begin to experience mild fatigue, but don’t push beyond that point. If you do, again, it can be counterproductive and you can feel worse the next day.

• In addition to the exercise regimen mentioned above, you should also consider seeing someone who is holistically trained in helping you regain more function and flexibility. This can include seeing a structural integration specialist, chiropractor, and/or specialist in osteopathic manipulation. In general, gentle myofasical/massage techniques are preferred as again you may not be able to tolerate a deep massage.

Being Mindful and Spiritual

An important aspect of healing with fibromyalgia is recognizing the connection between mind, body and spirit. The mental and emotional aspects of treatment cannot be ignored.

• Daily meditation is vital to calm the mind and body.
• Daily prayer can help relax the mind and body.
• FMS is often associated with trauma, especially emotional trauma. Helping one to recover from emotional trauma is essential to recovery. Talking with a counselor or advisor can be very helpful.
• The role of family and friend support cannot be emphasized enough.

References:


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