

Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FM) is a complex chronic pain syndrome defined as a widespread pain for more than 3 months and the diagnosis of the presence of 11 (or more) out of 18 tender points on both sides of the body, above and below the waist, and along the length of the spine. The term 'fibromyalgia' means pain in muscles and fibrous tissues (tendons and ligaments).

FM represents one end of the spectrum of musculoskeletal pain in the general population and is a chronic illness that disproportionately affects women (9:1 ratio of women to men affected).

It is thought that fibromyalgia may be due to a malfunction in the way the central nervous system processes pain signals. This leads to people with fibromyalgia experiencing as pain, sensations that other people might perceive as uncomfortable.

There are many conditions that commonly occur with fibromyalgia. Some of these may be chronic fatigue syndrome or irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).

Symptoms

A person diagnosed with fibromyalgia may experience a wide range of symptoms, primarily:

- muscle and joint pain,
- disturbed sleep,
- morning stiffness
- Pronounced fatigue.

Additionally people may experience symptoms such as:

- numbness and tingling in the hands and feet,
- migraine and tension headache,
- light-headedness,
- dizziness,
- sensitivity to light, sound and odours
- Re-current abdominal pain or intestinal disturbances.
- Diarrhoea.
- Difficulty swallowing.
- Irritable bladder leading to frequent or painful urination.
- Dry eyes and mouth.

Psychological Therapy

Psychological therapy or treatment of fibromyalgia is individualized, utilising a multi-faceted approach in order to achieve improvement in the person's health and wellbeing. Following a detailed psychological assessment an individually tailored treatment plan is agreed. Psychological therapy may involve a team based approach in conjunction with other healthcare professionals such as physiotherapists or medical specialists/consultants, or individual one to one psychological therapy.

The type of psychological therapy offered is focussed on the person's individual needs and preferences as determined during the psychological assessment:

- Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy CBT
- Mindfulness
- Motivational Interviewing
- Stress management / reduction
- Applied Relaxation
- Exposure based treatments
- Problem Solving
- Emotional Regulation and Distress Tolerance
- Psychodynamic approaches

Psychological Interventions

Other factors central to the psychological treatment and management of fibromyalgia may include some of the following as according to the type of therapy offered:

- Education and understanding of fibromyalgia
- Understanding and managing emotions (anxiety, depression, stress, anger, low mood),
- Pain management techniques (distraction, relaxation, pain transformation, acceptance)
- Identifying and managing appropriate levels of activity and pacing
- Managing sleep disturbance
- Understanding and managing diet, alcohol, caffeine
- Supporting effective prescribed medication use and adherence
- Goal setting or identifying values central to the individuals wellbeing
- Addressing interpersonal issues affecting management of fibromyalgia
- Re-engagement with family, whanau, friends and social activities
- Resuming participation in work, hobbies interests or meaningful activities