



What is it?

Fibromyalgia is a common health problem in which individuals experience chronic, widespread musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, and tenderness. The American College of Rheumatology (ACR) classification criteria for fibromyalgia diagnosis requires a history of at least three months of widespread pain which is experienced in particular tender point places; the pain is most commonly located within soft tissue.

Unfortunately, there is no test to detect fibromyalgia; diagnosis is the result of ruling out other health problems through imaging and other diagnostic testing protocols. There is currently no cure for the disease, which places the current treatment protocol focus on managing symptoms and self-care.

Fibromyalgia is said to affect 2-4% of the adult population and females are more likely to have the disease than men.

What do people experience?

- Chronic, widespread pain
- Tenderness to touch or pressure affecting muscles and sometimes joints
- Fatigue/nonrestorative sleep

- Cognitive dysfunction (concentration issues, memory/recall problems)
- Somatic symptoms (irritable bowel syndrome, headaches, migraines)
- Mood disorders (depression/anxiety)

Symptoms can vary in intensity between individuals, and there may be periods of time where symptoms are more intense than others.

Risk factors

Risk factors for discomfort include:

- Poor fitting or worn out footwear
- Improper footwear for activity
- High impact exercise
- Heavy weight or intensity of exercise during periods of heightened symptoms
- Being overweight or obese may increase the pressure placed on your feet and the forces being transmitted through your joints
- Life stress and worry (anxiety) have been shown to worsen symptoms
- Fatigue

What can you do to feel better today?

You can still live a happy, healthy life by taking active, daily measures to manage your fibromyalgia pain.

Symptom management

It's important to identify triggers in daily activities that increase the severity of your individual symptoms. Proper identification and management of these factors is crucial to minimizing flare-ups, which ultimately results in a decrease in pain levels.

Activity

It is important to maintain an active and enjoyable lifestyle when living with fibromyalgia. Mild to moderate intensity, low impact exercise is commonly recommended to maintain mobility and activity levels. When implementing new activity into your daily routine, it is important to remember that you want to take a progressive approach. Start off at a comfortable activity level and slowly progress over time in order to limit or avoid post exercise pain. Always consult with the appropriate health care professional before starting a new exercise program.

Sleep

Ensure that you are sleeping enough throughout the night and that you have a well established bed time. Make time to relax or take time for yourself at some point during the day in order to minimize fatigue. Doing so will allow you to stay physically and mentally focused and minimize the feeling of being exhausted at the end of the day. Proper pacing techniques can be implemented within the work and home environment to help you manage your time more effectively.

Self-education

If you haven't done so by now, educate yourself about the disease. Utilize healthcare professionals and materials, like books and (verified) websites, which can help with pain management.

What are my options for treatment? Who can help?

There are numerous treatment options available for fibromyalgia. Treatment focuses on both pharmacological and non-pharmacological aspects and are mainly tailored toward pain management, restorative sleep and maintaining activity.

From the pharmacological aspect, the goal of medication is usually focused on decreasing the level of pain or increasing the quality of sleep. Keep in mind that these two areas should be treated separately. Your family physician will be more than happy to discuss appropriate medications or lifestyle alterations and address any additional questions you may have.

In respect to the non-pharmacological treatment options, exercise, relaxation, and lifestyle management are the key focus. Choosing the proper exercise program is crucial to the management of symptoms. Exercise prescription, relaxation techniques and pain management can be discussed with physiotherapists, kinesiologists, podiatrists, and other health care professionals.

Occupational therapists can help with lifestyle and household modifications to assist with activities of daily living while minimizing fatigue and other triggers.

Focusing on the foot, podiatrists are rigorously trained in the assessment and treatment of various different pathologies and diseases, including fibromyalgia. Your podiatrist can help with concerns relating to the foot and lower extremity. This can come in the form of footwear prescription or modification, custom or off-the-shelf orthoses, or range of motion exercise and stretching techniques to make sure that you can maintain your activity level effectively.

Prevention/Prehabilitation

Currently, there is little known about the prevention of fibromyalgia because of its unknown causes. There are, however, a number of measures that can be taken to limit flare-ups and manage your symptoms.

- One of the most beneficial factors when living with fibromyalgia is educating both yourself and the individuals around you about your condition. Doing this will allow for a better understanding of the factors which influence the flare-up of symptoms. Realizing what causes these flare-ups will allow you to limit your susceptibility to these situations or circumstances. Learning about your condition will allow you to be proactive when it comes to preventing symptoms and coping with pain.
- Footwear is an important aspect to consider. Properly fitted shoes are vital in the prevention of foot pain. The proper shoe selection (given your activity), can make a substantial difference. Width, length, depth, level of support, and cushion are all factors to consider. Consult your pedorthist for more information.
- Foot orthotics can play a pivotal role in the prevention of foot discomfort. With appropriate support and cushion for the arches of your feet, research has shown the custom foot orthoses are effective at increasing overall function of individuals with fibromyalgia.
- Modifying or limiting activities that cause discomfort can be an effective way to reduce symptoms. Low impact exercises such as riding a bike, swimming, or using an elliptical machine instead of running can help to limit discomfort.

Staying active with a plan

Daily discomfort can be managed – and in many cases, improved – with moderate intensity, low impact exercise. During times of heightened symptoms or flare-ups, low intensity, range of motion exercises may help limit pain and discomfort. High impact and high intensity exercises should be limited when beginning an exercise program. In order to limit and control pain and soreness, progression should be slow and steady with small incremental changes along the way. Appropriate warm up and cool down should always be performed before and after exercise to ensure optimal muscle function.

If you are new to exercise or have questions regarding appropriate exercise selection, consult with your kinesiologist or physiotherapist.

DON'T LET FIBROMYALGIA GET YOU DOWN. GET BACK ON YOUR FEET, TODAY.

To feel better, read on!

How can SoleScience help you feel better?

Your SoleScience Pedorthist will create an individualized treatment plan that suits your specific needs, goals, and symptoms. We will work with you to determine not only what we need to do to address your current concerns, but also to prevent future problems.

Your pedorthist will complete a thorough and comprehensive foot examination at your initial appointment. A comprehensive follow-up exam will ensure that you are meeting your goals and allow your pedorthist to reassess your treatment plan (as necessary). During these appointments we will:

- Assess joint and muscle function, including range of motion and gait assessment
- Assess your footwear for both fit and function
- Identify any risk factors that can be modified and make recommendations for change
- Identify areas of risk with specialized tools such as pressure mapping (F-Scan or Pedograph)
- Discuss a treatment plan, which may include a change in footwear, activity modification, or custom foot orthoses and/or a complementary treatment referral (such as physiotherapy)

In addition to your individual treatment plan, your SoleScience Pedorthist will provide you with educational resources to help you best maintain your foot health.

Our take on the need for custom foot orthoses

Custom foot orthoses are appropriate for a variety of conditions and fibromyalgia is no exception! With this being said, the majority of evidence refers to maintaining physical activity as one of the best ways to manage pain and symptoms relating to fibromyalgia. Therefore, if the pain in your feet is keeping you from enjoying activity, foot orthoses may provide you with a level of comfort necessary to be physically active. Evidence has shown an increase in overall function with individuals while using orthotics. Foot orthoses can be used to reduce or control

motions of the foot and relieve abnormal stress from soft tissue that may be contributing your discomfort.

Custom vs. OTS

Off-the-shelf orthotics (OTS) are pre-fabricated devices that can be fit in to your shoes right from the shelf. This type of orthotic is typically heat-moldable allowing for a degree of immediate customization. Truly custom-made foot orthoses are differentiated in that they are designed specifically around a 3D model of your foot. This type of orthotic can be completely tailored to suit your needs.

Footwear recommendations

Appropriate footwear selection is important for day-to-day comfort and depends on your specific mechanics. Generally speaking, footwear with ample cushion and support work well for managing fibromyalgia symptoms. No matter which shoe you select, proper fit is vital. Length, width, depth and heel height are important considerations to make. Consult with your pedorthist for recommendations specific to your foot type and intended use.