

# What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a disorder that causes widespread pain and extreme tiredness. Researchers say that your brain and body may process pain differently. This makes pain sensations feel worse. More women than men have fibromyalgia.



## WHAT DOES FIBROMYALGIA FEEL LIKE?

It feels like pain all over your body. The pain lasts a long time. You may have trouble sleeping and be very tired. You may have headaches, painful periods, problems with thinking or remembering, tingling in your feet or your hands, and body stiffness in the morning.

## WHAT CAUSES FIBROMYALGIA?

The cause of fibromyalgia is not known. You also may have other chronic pain conditions. You may have depression or anxiety. It is not known if these other conditions are related. You may have experienced a stressful event before your pain started. This could include a flu-like illness, emotional pain, and accident or overwork. There also may not be one single stressful event that happened. Your symptoms may have come on gradually.

## HOW CAN I FEEL BETTER?

Some medicines can be helpful in fibromyalgia, but they usually do not make the pain disappear all the way. Using mind-body practices can help the pain, and also help you change how you feel about the pain. Your mind and body are connected. This is why your thoughts and feelings are important. These mind-body practices could help you:

**Tai Chi:** A mind-body practice from China. It involves moving the body slowly, gently, and with control.

**QiGong:** Another mind-body practice from China. It uses slow physical movement, mental focus, and breathing.

**Yoga:** A mind-body practice to give a deep sense of calm. There are many different types to try.



**Your health care provider can help you find professionals to try these techniques:**

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** CBT is a common type of talk therapy. You work with a mental health counselor to identify how

negative thinking affects you so that you can respond to difficult situations in a more positive way.

**Hypnosis/guided imagery:** A hypnotherapist teaches you how to relax. You may feel like you are almost dreaming. You may want to try listening to a CD or other recording of guided imagery or hypnosis. In addition to practice this on your own.



**Massage Therapy:** Massage can help to reduce pain and improve how you feel. It can increase how much pain you can tolerate.

**Acupuncture:** a Traditional Chinese treatment using very thin needles in the skin. It can help with pain relief.

## SOME THINGS TO CONSIDER WITH YOUR HEALTH PROVIDER:

**Exercise:** Exercise is important. It helps your general health. But sometimes exercise that is too difficult can make your body pain worse. Gentle, low impact exercise like walking, swimming, and stretching are the right place to start.

**An Anti-Inflammatory Diet:** Eating healthy helps your general health. This diet focuses on fresh vegetables and fruit. It avoids processed food and sugar. It is easy to follow! Find a link to the AI Diet on the web address below.

**Elimination Diet:** Food or drinks could cause some of your symptoms. Talk to your doctor about an elimination diet. Learn more on the web address below.

**Vitamin D:** Get your Vitamin D levels checked. Low levels of vitamin D have been associated with widespread pain.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/fibromyalgia](http://nciph.org/fibromyalgia)



