



Fibromyalgia: Symptoms, Causes and Management

Rehab Jesiie*

Department of physiology, Tanta University, Tanta, Egypt

*Corresponding author: Rehab Jesiie, Department of physiology, Tanta University, Tanta, Egypt; E-mail: rehabjesiie@123.com

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Description

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. It is a complex condition that is often misunderstood and misdiagnosed, leading to significant challenges for those who live with it fibromyalgia, including its symptoms, causes, and management strategies, to help raise awareness and provide a better understanding of this condition.

Symptoms of fibromyalgia

The hallmark symptom of fibromyalgia is widespread musculoskeletal pain that lasts for at least three months. The pain is often described as aching, burning, or throbbing and is typically accompanied by tender points or trigger points on various parts of the body, such as the neck, shoulders, chest, back, hips, and knees. These tender points are highly sensitive to pressure and can cause intense pain when touched. In addition to pain, fibromyalgia can also cause a range of other symptoms, which may vary from person to person.

Fatigue: Many people with fibromyalgia experience extreme fatigue, even after getting enough sleep. This can lead to a constant feeling of exhaustion and can significantly impact a person's quality of life.

Sleep disturbances: Sleep disturbances are common in fibromyalgia, and affected individuals may have difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, or experiencing restorative sleep. This can further contribute to fatigue and overall discomfort.

Cognitive difficulties: Fibromyalgia can also affect cognitive functions, leading to problems with memory, concentration, and decision-making. This is often referred to as "fibro fog" and can make it challenging to carry out daily tasks.

Mood disturbances: Anxiety, depression, and mood swings are also common in fibromyalgia. The chronic pain and other symptoms associated with the condition can take a toll on a person's mental health, leading to emotional distress and a decreased quality of life.

Other physical symptoms: Fibromyalgia can cause a variety of other physical symptoms, such as headaches, Irritable Bowel Syndrome

(IBS), jaw pain, numbness or tingling in the extremities, and sensitivity to light, noise, or temperature changes.

Causes of fibromyalgia

The exact cause of fibromyalgia is still unknown, and research is ongoing to better understand this complex condition. However, several factors have been proposed to play a role in its development.

Genetic predisposition: There is evidence to suggest that fibromyalgia may have a genetic component, as it tends to run in families. Certain gene mutations may make some individuals more susceptible to developing fibromyalgia.

Abnormal pain processing: Fibromyalgia is believed to involve changes in the way the brain and spinal cord process pain signals. People with fibromyalgia may have a heightened sensitivity to pain due to an increased release of certain neurotransmitters that amplify pain signals.

Environmental triggers: Some environmental triggers, such as physical injuries, infections, or emotional trauma, may trigger the onset of fibromyalgia in susceptible individuals. These triggers may disrupt the normal functioning of the nervous system and lead to the development of fibromyalgia symptoms.

Hormonal imbalances: Hormonal imbalances, such as changes in levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood and pain, have also been implicated in fibromyalgia. However, the relationship between hormonal imbalances and fibromyalgia is complex and not fully understood.

Management strategies for fibromyalgia

Medication: Medications can be used to manage the pain, fatigue, and other symptoms of fibromyalgia. These may include over-the-counter pain relievers such as acetaminophen or Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs), as well as prescription medications such as antidepressants, anticonvulsants, and muscle relaxants. Medications are typically tailored to the individual's specific symptoms and may require ongoing adjustments.

Physical therapy: Physical therapy can be beneficial for managing fibromyalgia symptoms. A physical therapist can help design a personalized exercise program that includes aerobic exercise, strength training, and flexibility exercises to improve muscle strength, endurance, and flexibility. Physical therapy may also include other techniques such as heat or cold therapy, ultrasound, or massage.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT): CBT is a type of therapy that focuses on changing negative thought patterns and behaviors. It can be effective in managing fibromyalgia by helping individuals cope with pain, improve sleep, manage stress, and develop healthy coping strategies. CBT may also involve relaxation techniques, stress management, and sleep hygiene education.

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