

Fibromyalgia

Let's get the conversation started



Did you know?

Did you know that although anyone can develop fibromyalgia symptoms, it affects around 7 times as many women as men? Or that the condition is difficult to diagnose because there are no specific tests and that symptoms can be similar to other conditions?

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition characterised by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory, and mood issues. Symptoms can vary in severity and may come and go or be persistent.

Why is it important to talk about fibromyalgia?

- Fibromyalgia is most likely influenced by a combination of genetic susceptibility and exposure to possible triggers, including physical and emotional trauma, viral or bacterial infections, exposure to chronic and acute stress, and hormonal changes.
- People with fibromyalgia experience pain in ways no one else can really understand.
- They may look okay on the outside but are experiencing pain on the inside.
- The condition typically develops between the ages of 30 and 50 but can occur in people of any age, including children and the elderly.
- Stress and trauma may contribute to the development of fibromyalgia, which may impact more on minority groups.
- Data appears to suggest that fibromyalgia is more prevalent in white women, but newer studies emphasise that fibromyalgia might be equally prevalent in black and hispanic women.
- Evidence shows that LGBT+ patients face worse outcomes due to various barriers in accessing appropriate healthcare.

Possible symptoms

- Widespread pain
- Extreme tiredness
- Muscle stiffness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Problems with mental processes or brain fog (known as fibro-fog)
- Headaches
- Irritable bowel syndrome.

Due to these many non-specific symptoms, fibromyalgia is sometimes mistaken for other conditions and might only be diagnosed many years after the onset of the first symptoms.

Available support

Fibromyalgia is a difficult condition to live with, both physically and emotionally. Self-care advice around exercise, relaxation, and sleep habits can be found on the [NHS website](#) and [Fibromyalgia Action UK](#) is a useful source of information and support.

The PDA NAWP (National Association of Women Pharmacists) Network and the PDA want to play their part in raising awareness of fibromyalgia and how this can affect people in everyday life and in the workplace. The network urges employers to adopt effective policies and interventions to support employees affected by fibromyalgia.

Employers need to acknowledge that employees diagnosed with fibromyalgia might require time off work for treatment and medical appointments as well as allow flexibility with working hours, the tasks that need to be performed, and the working environment.

References: NHS, mayoclinic.org, WebMD.com, England.nhs.uk, Fit For Work, LGBT Foundation Hidden Figures report