

Fibromyalgia Demystified

Bodywork as a Key Therapy

Cathy Ulrich

Jane had just been diagnosed with fibromyalgia. She was happy to have a name for the mysterious, traveling pain she had felt for some time, but she was still worried about how to deal with it. She'd done research on the Internet, but the information left her more confused. "There are so many causes and ways to treat it," she said. "I don't know what to do." A friend of Jane's recommended massage as part of her treatment plan. "She said it helped her," Jane said, "so I'm willing to try."

For fibromyalgia sufferers, muscle pain, tightness, and general body discomfort can all too often become a way of life. But what is fibromyalgia, and what can be done to help?

Theories about the cause of fibromyalgia include thyroid imbalance, sleep disorders, genetic predisposition, allergies, trauma--especially whiplash injuries--and possibly even viruses. Many who have fibromyalgia syndrome have other conditions as well, including depression, irritable bowel syndrome, chemical sensitivities, intolerance to exercise, restless legs syndrome, extreme sensitivity to cold, and seasonal affective disorder.

Factors At Play

Jay Goldstein, MD, a leading researcher and clinician, identified three common factors in people who are susceptible to fibromyalgia. It's helpful to consider

"Self care is how you take your power back."

-Lalah Delia



Bodywork can ease the pain of fibromyalgia, helping people improve their quality of life.

What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia, which literally means "connective tissue muscle pain," causes severe tenderness in multiple points throughout the body as well as persistent fatigue, morning stiffness, and non-refreshing sleep. Fibromyalgia is found in about 2 percent of the adult population, and women are five to seven times more likely to have it than men.

these factors when planning a treatment approach:

1. Biochemical factors, such as hormonal disturbances, allergies, frequent colds and viruses, and nutritional deficiencies.
2. Biomechanical factors, such as

Continued on page 2

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In this Issue

Fibromyalgia Demystified
Healthy Holidays
Try This Breathing Exercise

Continued from page 1

congenital deformities (one leg longer than the other or scoliosis, curvature of the spine) or functional conditions (poor posture, overuse syndromes, or poor breathing patterns).

3. Psychosocial factors, like depression, anxiety, or difficulty coping with stress.

Bodywork Can Help

Fibromyalgia is best treated using a multidisciplinary approach, and bodywork can be a key part of healing, recovery, and management. Depending on your specific needs, any or all of the following methods may be helpful.

Swedish Massage

Because stress is such a strong component of fibromyalgia, regular massages for relaxation and stress reduction can be beneficial to your program. Swedish massage is the foundation of training for most massage therapists. Its primary goals are to gently relieve muscle tension, improve circulation, and restore the balance between mind and body.

Rolfing

This whole-body approach is designed to restore postural alignment and ease. Rolfing--and other related forms of bodywork under the umbrella of structural integration--helps to free soft tissue tightness and remove the structural imbalances that create stresses and strains on the body, restoring biomechanical function. Whiplash and other types of neck injuries are commonly seen in fibromyalgia cases. Rolfing aligns the body so the head and neck can rest more easily.

Lymphatic Massage

The lymph system is the body's primary way of eliminating waste at the cellular level. When the lymph system is backed up, tissues can get bogged down and become irritated, inflamed, and swollen. Biochemical disturbances are a key factor in fibromyalgia, so restoring the mechanical function of the lymph system can be important. Lymphatic massage is a specific form of therapy designed to improve circulation, remove waste, and reduce swelling in the tissues. It's often a good way to start a bodywork session.

Neuromuscular Therapy

Trigger points--pivotal body points that

hold and release pressure--become small areas of extreme tenderness and tightness for fibromyalgia patients. Neuromuscular therapy is a specific form of bodywork designed to free these trigger points along with the fiber in the surrounding tissues. Neuromuscular therapy encompasses many different techniques, but the system is designed to relieve the tightness in the deep soft tissues and to eliminate trigger points.

Considerations

Sensitivity to touch varies greatly for fibromyalgia patients. Some people prefer very deep work, while others are sensitive to the lightest pressure. It's important that you establish good communications with your massage therapist so you can explain what feels comfortable to you and what doesn't.

When you're in an acute flare-up, limit your bodywork to more gentle

techniques. When you're feeling better, deeper work intended to eliminate trigger points or work on posture may be more appropriate. Partner with your therapist to find the best approach.

You may be sore after a session. A moderate level of soreness can be expected, but should only last about forty-eight hours as your body adapts to the changes. If it lasts longer or is more severe, bodywork may be too aggressive or the session may be too long. Start out slowly, learn what works best for you, and let your therapist increase the time or intensity as you progress.

Fibromyalgia is a soft tissue condition, and bodyworkers are experts at working with soft tissues. By including massage in your care, you can expect to manage and improve your fibromyalgia.



Free yourself from the often debilitating discomfort of fibromyalgia and take back your life.

Healthy Holidays

Five Tips for the Natural Traveler

Planning a vacation or business trip? Consider packing a small kit of natural remedies before you go. Unfamiliar surroundings, unusual foods, and jet lag can make you vulnerable to viruses, stress, and gastrointestinal (GI) upset. Colorado Naturopathic Physician Michael Sutton suggests the following items:

1. GRAPEFRUIT SEED EXTRACT

This extract fights and prevents viruses and helps reduce symptoms of diarrhea and GI upset. It can even be used to decontaminate water (4-5 drops extract per quart of water). A few days before you leave, mix 4-5 drops with juice or water and drink it before bedtime, and continue for the duration of your trip. If you do catch a cold or flu, you can drink as much as 8-10 drops, 3-4 times a day.

2. AIRBORNE

Available in natural products stores, Airborne is an effervescent tablet containing herbs, antioxidants, vitamin

C, and amino acids. It helps prevent and fight colds, as well as motion sickness, when traveling.

3. MELATONIN

To ease jet lag, Sutton suggests leaving your watch set for the time zone from which you're departing. When your watch shows your normal bedtime, take 3-6mg of melatonin, then go to sleep to regulate yourself quickly and easily to the new time zone.

4. BACH FLOWER RESCUE REMEDY

To calm nerves and reduce anxiety, place a few drops of this remedy under your tongue when you're feeling anxious, or add 5-6 drops to your water bottle and drink throughout the day.

5. WATER

H₂O is essential to healthy travel. Drink lots of water and avoid alcohol, as dehydration is a major cause of travel-related illness.

By packing a few natural remedies and

paying attention to your body's needs, you'll be able to fully enjoy your trip.



Staying healthy is key to a good vacation.

Try This Breathing Exercise

Anne Williams

Do you ever find yourself unconsciously holding your breath when you're tense? This can cause tension to build in your body and may let the chest collapse, leading to misalignment.

Proper breathing provides oxygen to the muscles and body, helps you stay relaxed and centered, and even helps you maintain correct body alignment throughout your day.

You can also use breathwork as part of a stress-reduction program by following this progressive relaxation exercise.

1. Begin by lying in a comfortable position without crossing your arms or legs, and focus on your breathing to create a slow, deep pattern. Inhale through your nose while counting to 10 and expanding your abdomen. Hold the breath for one second, and exhale

through your nose on the count of 10. Inhale and exhale in this pattern five times.

2. Beginning with your head, tense your facial muscles as tightly as possible and count to five. Release the muscles completely, and sense the muscles feeling heavy and still. Work down your entire body, tensing muscle groups and then relaxing them. After the head, move to the neck, chest, arms and hands, abdomen, back, thighs and gluteals, lower legs, and feet.

3. After relaxing each set of muscles, mentally scan your body for any areas of remaining tension and ask those areas to relax completely.

4. Repeat the slow breathing exercise.

5. Gently begin to move your body to come out of the deeply relaxed state.

Try using progressive relaxation directly

before or after your sessions, directly before bed, or at any time during the day as a pick-me-up. Focus on taking full, deep, even, rhythmic breaths. With a little practice, you can become more aware of your own breathing patterns and use breathwork effectively as you move throughout your day.

*"Happiness is
the highest form
of health."*

-Dalai Lama

Starting in December we will be giving out our holiday gifts. Our gesture of thanks for your continued support :)

This holiday season, we have you covered from gift certificates to small self care gifts, including: Therapy Packs, Lotion Bars, Goat Milk Soap, Essential Oil Rollers, and more.

We are open Sat 12/10 from 12:30-2:30pm for open shopping hours.

I will send an email the week before as a reminder.

We also have been adding new intuitive classes and offerings.

Keep an eye on our fb page and online scheduler for what's new!

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