

> What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition that causes widespread pain. The pain can be felt in any part of the body. In addition to pain people may experience extreme tiredness, stiffness in their muscles and have difficulty sleeping.

> What are the symptoms?

In addition to pain and tiredness symptoms can include:

- Headaches – ranging from ordinary types to migraine
- Alternating diarrhoea and constipation, sometimes accompanied by gas in the abdomen or nausea
- Lack of concentration, temporary memory impairment and word mix up
- Clumsiness and dizziness
- Sensitivity to changes in the weather and to noise, bright lights, smoke and other environmental factors
- Allergies

> What are the causes?

The exact cause is unknown but it is likely that a number of factors are involved:

- Changes in the way the central nervous system processes pain messages around the body resulting in constant feelings of and sensitivity to, pain.
- Chemical imbalances. Our hormones control many things in our bodies including how we process pain, our mood, appetite, sleep, and how we react to stressful situations. Research has shown that people living with Fibromyalgia have lower than usual levels of certain hormones.
- Triggers. In some people the condition is triggered by physical or emotional stress caused by a stressful life event such as; an injury, an operation, an abusive relationship, relationship breakdown or bereavement.

> What about treatment?

Treatment for is designed to relieve the symptoms but because there are many symptoms associated with Fibromyalgia no single treatment will work for everyone. You might find yourself referred to a:

- **Rheumatologist** – a specialist in conditions that affect muscles and joints
- **Neurologist** – a specialist in conditions of the central nervous system
- **Psychologist** – a specialist in mental health and psychological treatments

You could be prescribed:

- Painkillers
- Anti-depressants
- Muscle relaxants
- Medication to help you sleep

Self Care Tips

Relaxation – finding ways to relax has been shown to help manage symptoms. You could try having a warm bath, listening to music or techniques such as mindfulness and meditation.

Heat – having a warm shower or bath or using a hot water bottle helps many people to reduce pain, stiffness and aching.

Diet – no particular diet has been found to help but it's important to eat a healthy, balanced diet and try to cut down on caffeine and alcohol.

Exercise and Pacing – Physical activity has been shown to be helpful for people living with Fibromyalgia. Exercise improves our mood, builds our stamina, keeps us supple, helps us sleep and helps us maintain a healthy weight. If you are living with Fibromyalgia and haven't exercised in a while, you may experience pain and discomfort when you start. You will need to build up gradually and pace yourself.

> Related resources

<p>FMA UK (Fibromyalgia Association)</p> <p>www.fmauk.org</p> <p>Help Line: 0300 999 3333</p> <p>Benefits Line: 0300 999 0055</p>	<p>A national charity providing information and advice for the public and for health professionals. A really useful site containing advice, the latest research and information about treatment.</p>
<p>Bromley Well Fibromyalgia Peer Support Group</p>	<p>Meets on the last Friday of every month in Community House, South Street, Bromley, BR1 1RH from 11.30am until 1.00pm.</p> <p>Contact Diana Norris</p> <p>dean.baldwin@bromleywell.org.uk</p> <p>07985 444210</p>
<p>NHS Live Well</p>	<p>NHS Live Well pages have information on topics such as eating well, exercise, maintaining a healthy weight and looking after your emotional wellbeing.</p>
<p>NHS Conditions Fibromyalgia</p>	<p>NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of fibromyalgia and advice for people living with the condition.</p>
<p>NHS Wellbeing Apps</p>	<p>Links to NHS Wellbeing Apps designed to support you in making healthy lifestyle change and manage your emotional wellbeing.</p>

To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0808 278 7898** or Lifestyle Support on **07985 444210 / 07399 202313** Email enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk www.bromleywell.org.uk

