

A Natural Approach to Fibromyalgia

By Robert G. Silverman, DC, MS, CNS, DACBN, CCN, CSCS, CIISN

You hurt all over, and you frequently feel exhausted. Even after numerous tests, your doctor can't seem to find anything specifically wrong with you. If this sounds all too familiar, you may have fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition characterized by fatigue, widespread pain in your muscles, and multiple tender points. It affects 3 to 6 million Americans. For reasons unknown, between 80 to 90 percent of those diagnosed with fibromyalgia are women.

There are no definitive diagnostic tests (e.g. x-ray, blood, MRI) that can tell you if you have fibromyalgia. However, the diagnosis for fibromyalgia is based on two criteria established by The American College of Rheumatology: you have a history of muscle pain for 3 months or longer, and you have a minimum of 11 locations on your body that are abnormally tender under relatively mild, firm pressure (called tender points).

The tender points for fibromyalgia must be present in at least 11 out of 18 possible sites. (See diagram on page 2.)

The specific cause of fibromyalgia is unknown, although it is thought to be triggered by infections, physical traumas, sleep disturbances, chemical changes in the brain, and other illnesses such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis. Chronic fatigue syndrome is closely linked with fibromyalgia. Many irritable bowel syndrome sufferers also have fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia prompts many medical professionals to prescribe a variety of drugs (anti-depressants, NSAIDs, etc.)

None have been proven to be very effective.

Care That Has Helped

The most prominent symptom of fibromyalgia is pain. Symptoms like low back pain or neck pain, and soft-tissue related issues are commonly associated with fibromyalgia. Chiropractic treatments performed with patented soft tissue techniques, i.e. Active Release Technique (ART[®]) have been shown to aid in resolution of the symptomology. Low-impact exercise programs have also shown to improve fitness and alleviate pains. Stretching techniques to ease muscle tension, and relaxation therapy to reduce the impact of stress, are also recommended.

Diet

A number of dietary modifications have been shown to be effective in the complementary management of fibromyalgia, one of which is a vegetarian diet consisting of only raw foods (preferably organic) primarily of fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, legumes, and rolled oats. The diet should also contain some fermented foods including fermented beverage made from berries, and various types of fermented vegetables, particularly cabbage.

Another diet modification choice would be to eliminate all food allergens from the diet. The most common allergenic foods are dairy, soy, citrus, peanuts, wheat, fish, eggs, corn, and tomatoes. This diet modification will be useful in uncovering sensitivities. Remove the above foods from the diet for two weeks and then reintroduce foods at the rate of one food every three

days and watch for exacerbation of symptoms.

In my practice, I have found that I get great results in diets that are low in simple non-nutritious carbohydrates. The diet should consist of protein as a part of each meal and include a moderate amount of fats. The ideal ratio of caloric intake should be 30/30/40 (protein/fat/carbohydrate). Eating this way helps insulin sensitivity and normalizes metabolism. Eliminate inflammatory foods such as refined foods, sugar, saturated fats (meat and dairy products), alcohol, and caffeine. Eat whole foods such as vegetables, whole grains, fruits, protein, and essential fatty acids (e.g. cold water fish, nuts, and seeds).

Nutritional Supplement

I have found the following nutritional supplements to be helpful when dealing with fibromyalgia. (I strongly recommend a combination of the first five mentioned):

- **Magnesium** (300 – 600 mg per day) and **Malic acid** (1,200 – 1,400 mg per day): helps to reduce muscle pain and tenderness, and also fatigue
- **5-Hydroxytryptophan** (100 mg 3 times per day): can be effective at reducing many fibromyalgia symptoms (depression, anxiety, insomnia, and body pains). Contraindicated if the person uses anti-depressant drugs
- **Melatonin** (3 mg before bed): is a precursor to serotonin and contributes to impaired sleep, fatigue and altered pain perception
- **S-Adenosylmethionine (SaMe)** (400 mg twice a day): is a naturally occurring nutrient that improves the balance of neurotransmitters such as serotonin
- **Fish Oils (EPA/DHA Omega-3 fatty acids)** (1 – 3 g daily): Supplies pain-relieving effects

- **Flaxseed Oil (Omega-3 fatty acids)**: 2 tablespoons provide pain relieving effects
- **B vitamins**: help to reduce the effects of stress. B-complex (50 – 100 mg per day), niacinamide (100 mg per day) and B6 (100 mg per day)
- **Vitamin C** (250 – 500 mg twice a day): reduces inflammation and supports immune function
- **Co-enzyme Q10** (50 – 100 mg 1 – 2 times per day): improves oxygenation of tissues and antioxidant activity
- **Chromium picolinate** (200 mg with meals): may reduce reactive hypoglycemia, which may exacerbate symptoms
- **Zinc** (30 mg per day): is essential for immune function

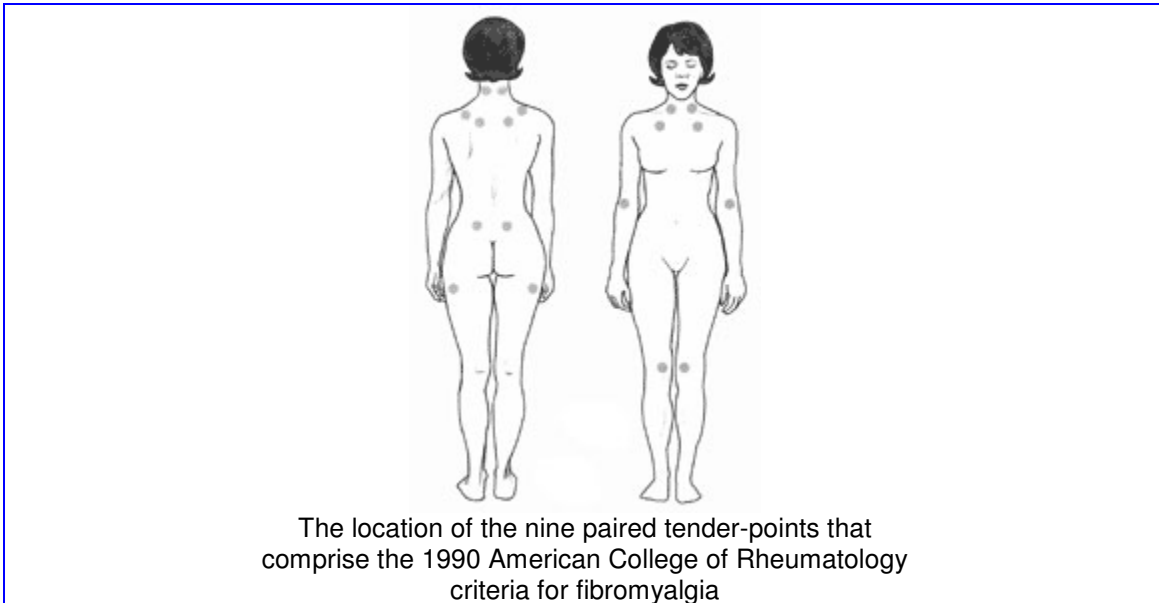
Herbs

- **Passionflower** (300 – 500 mg in capsule form) relaxes the nerves. It can also be taken before bed time to help with sleep
- **Valerian** (300 – 500 mg in capsule form) relaxes the nerves. It can also be taken before bedtime to help with sleep

I would also recommend synergistic super green foods such as chlorella, spirulina, barley grass powder and others. These support liver detoxification and energy production.

In summary, a number of natural therapies, nutritional supplements, and lifestyle modifications have been shown to be effective in managing a broad range of symptoms associated with fibromyalgia. It is my sincere hope that you will implement these suggestions and improve the quality of your life.

Figure 1.



Dr. Robert G. Silverman graduated Magna cum Laude from the University of Bridgeport, College of Chiropractic. He is a Certified Nutrition Specialist, Certified Clinical Nutritionist, has a Masters of Science in Human Nutrition, is a Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist, and is a Diplomat with the American Clinical Board of Nutrition. He has a full-time successful private practice in White Plains where he specializes in the diagnosis of joint pain and its treatments with an innovative, established and well-researched approach to non-surgical care while incorporating proper nutrition protocols. He is a nationally known speaker and author and can be seen weekly on his own local TV show "Get Healthy w/ Dr. Rob". More info at www.DrRobertSilverman.com.