

Fibromyalgia: Complementary/Alternative Medicine

Diagnosis requires fulfillment of all three major criteria and four or more minor criteria

MAJOR CRITERIA:

1. Generalized aches or stiffness of at least three anatomical sites for at least three months
2. Six or more typical, reproducible tender points
3. Exclusion of other disorders that can cause similar symptoms

MINOR CRITERIA:

- Generalized fatigue
- Chronic headache
- Sleep disturbance
- Neurological and psychological complaints
- Joint swelling
- Numbing or tingling sensations
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Variation of symptoms in relation to activity, stress, and weather changes

QUICK REVIEW

- Fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome share many features.
- Although fibromyalgia is a disorder that has many facets, the central cause of the pain of fibromyalgia is a low level of serotonin. The primary treatment goals in fibromyalgia are to raise serotonin levels, improve sleep quality, and assure adequate magnesium levels. Individuals with fibromyalgia have altered sleep patterns: reduced REM sleep and increased non-REM sleep.
- The severity of the pain of fibromyalgia correlates with the rating of poor sleep quality.
- 5-HTP has shown considerable benefit in treating fibromyalgia in double-blind studies
- Although 5-HTP can be effective on its own, we recommend the combination of 5-HTP (100 mg), St. John's wort extract (300 mg, 0.3-percent hypericin content), and magnesium (150 to 250 mg) three times per day.
- Magnesium supplementation has produced very good results in treating fibromyalgia.

TREATMENT SUMMARY

The primary treatment goals in fibromyalgia are to raise serotonin levels, improve sleep quality, and assure adequate magnesium levels. In addition, there may be recommendations given in the CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME chapter that are appropriate in any given case. Please follow the relevant recommendations given there.

Diet

Follow the recommendations given in A HEALTH-PROMOTING DIET.

Lifestyle

Follow the recommendations given in A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.

Nutritional Supplements

High potency multiple vitamin and mineral formula, according to guidelines given in SUPPLEMENTARY MEASURES

5-HTP: 50-100 mg three times per day Magnesium bound to citrate or
Krebs cycle intermediates (citrate, malate, fumarate, succinate,
aspartate): 150-250 mg three times per day

Botanical Medicines

- St. John's wort extract (0.3% hypericin): 300 mg three times per day