



Jensen's Mobile Notes

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Cultivating a Gardening Habit

Discover the Health Benefits of Yard Work

Feeling the need to exercise, clean up your diet, meditate? Want to be more creative, get out and meet people, enjoy the outdoors, and slow down? There's one activity in which you can accomplish all of these objectives: gardening.

Encouraging Exercise

Studies show that vigorous digging burns 500 calories an hour, weeding burns 210 calories, and mowing the lawn burns 400 calories. As a moderate exercise, gardening has been found to decrease the risk of heart disease and diabetes, and a study at the University of Arkansas found that gardening was almost as effective as weight lifting in reducing the risk for osteoporosis in women. So instead of taking that indoor aerobics class this summer, try mowing the lawn or planting an herb garden.

As with any exercise regimen, the key is to start at a comfortable pace and gradually work your way up to longer, more difficult activities. Your heart rate should be about the same as when you take a brisk walk.

Improving Your Diet

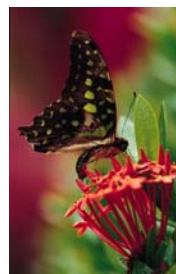
Gardening will also likely help you eat better. Research shows that people who grow gardens eat more vegetables and fruits than those who don't. Growing fresh herbs, even in a container on the deck or balcony, is another great way to add flavor and freshness to home-cooked meals and an incentive to try new recipes.

Boosting Your Social Life

Gardening can also be quite social. Whether at a garden club, a community garden, or an online forum, people love to share ideas, solve common problems, and connect through mutual interests.

Easing Stress

And finally, gardening is a great way to manage stress. Spending time outside and tuning in to the rhythms of nature, we're reminded to be patient, slow down, and breathe the fresh air. Whether growing flowers, vegetables, or herbs, a garden reminds us of our connection to life and the abundance that nature so freely gives.



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Fibromyalgia Demystified

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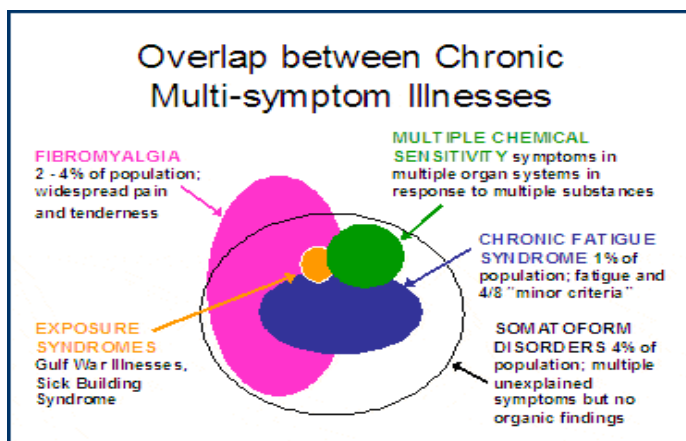
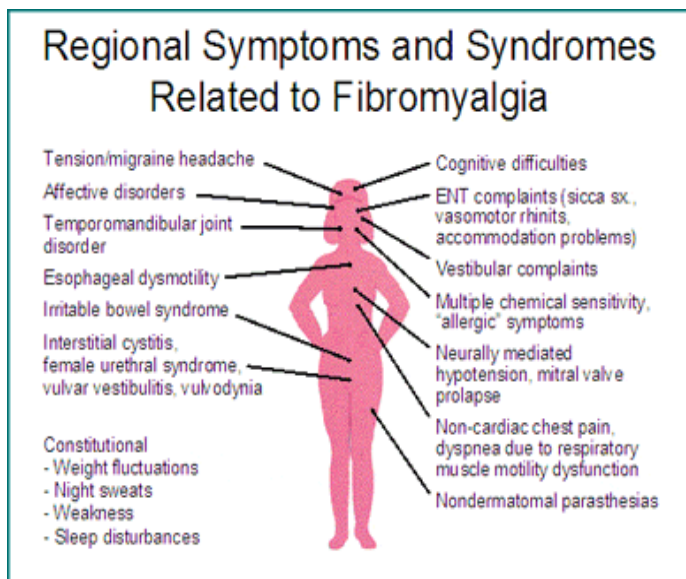
Massage a Key Therapy

Cathy Ulrich

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?

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.



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 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 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.

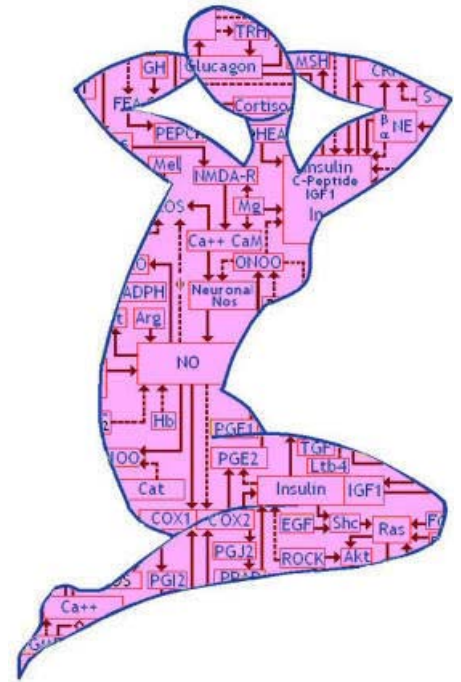
Considerations

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.



*Spring is here, garden in bloom.
Cleaning, gardening remove winters gloom.*

*Kids out of school, so much to do,
stress is blossoming, time to pamper you.*

*Muscles not used cry out in pain,
time to visit your therapist again.*

*Under her hands stress is released,
Finally you have at least one hour of peace.*

Deborah Jensen, 2008



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