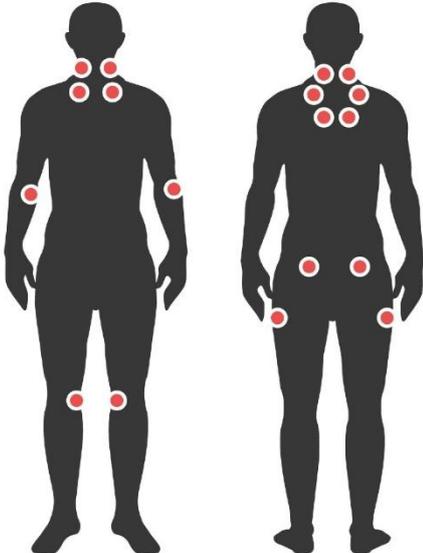


Fibromyalgia

FIBROMYALGIA symptoms				trigger points	
					<p>FRONT</p> <p>BACK</p>
pain in the muscles	pain in the bones	general fatigue	headaches		
					
dry eyes	depression and anxiety	trouble focusing or paying attention	trouble sleeping		
					
dull ache in the lower belly	bladder problems (interstitial cystitis)	palpitations	functional bowel disturbances		

What is fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a **long-term (chronic) condition** that causes widespread pain and tenderness in the body. It is also associated with fatigue, sleep problems, and difficulties with concentration and memory.

Fibromyalgia does **not cause damage** to muscles, joints, or organs. Symptoms are related to changes in how the **nervous system processes pain**.

Who is affected?

Fibromyalgia can affect anyone but is more common:

- In adults aged 30–60 years
 - In women more than men
 - In people with other long-term conditions (e.g. arthritis, IBS, migraines)
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Common symptoms

Symptoms vary from person to person and may fluctuate over time. Common symptoms include:

- Widespread pain affecting both sides of the body
 - Muscle stiffness, especially in the morning
 - Fatigue and low energy levels
 - Poor or unrefreshing sleep
 - Brain fog (difficulty concentrating or remembering)
 - Headaches or migraines
 - Sensitivity to touch, temperature, light, or noise
 - Low mood or anxiety
-

What causes fibromyalgia?

The exact cause is not fully understood. Fibromyalgia is thought to be linked to:

- Increased sensitivity of the nervous system (central sensitisation)
- Changes in how the brain and spinal cord process pain signals
- Physical or emotional stress, illness, or injury triggering symptoms

Fibromyalgia is **not caused by inflammation or joint damage**.

How is fibromyalgia diagnosed?

There is no single test for fibromyalgia. Diagnosis is based on:

- Widespread pain lasting longer than 3 months
- Associated symptoms such as fatigue and poor sleep
- Medical history and examination

- Excluding other conditions through tests if needed
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Treatment and management

There is no single cure, but symptoms can be **effectively managed**.

Education and understanding

- Learning about fibromyalgia helps reduce fear and improve self-management

Exercise and physical activity

- Gentle, regular exercise is one of the most effective treatments
- Activities may include walking, swimming, cycling, yoga, or Pilates
- Start slowly and build up gradually

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy can help with:

- Graded exercise programmes
- Improving strength, mobility, and confidence in movement
- Pacing and activity planning

Pain management

- Medication may be prescribed by your GP or specialist
- Heat, relaxation, and breathing techniques may help

Sleep and lifestyle

- Improving sleep routines is important
 - Stress management strategies can reduce flare-ups
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Pacing and flare-ups

- Balance activity and rest to avoid overdoing it
 - Break tasks into smaller steps
 - Expect good and bad days – this is normal
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Self-management tips

- Stay as active as possible within your limits
 - Maintain regular sleep patterns
 - Eat a balanced diet
 - Manage stress using relaxation techniques
 - Set realistic goals and celebrate progress
-

When should I seek further help?

Speak to your GP or healthcare professional if:

- Symptoms are worsening or difficult to manage
 - Pain or fatigue significantly affects daily life or work
 - You feel low in mood or anxious
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Outlook

Although fibromyalgia is a long-term condition, many people learn to manage their symptoms well and lead **active, fulfilling lives** with the right support and self-management strategies.

If you have concerns or need support, speak to your GP or physiotherapist for further advice.