

FAST FACTS: Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia (FM) is characterized by chronic widespread pain and tenderness in muscles, tendons, and other soft tissues. Symptoms are debilitating fatigue, sleep problems, headaches, depression, anxiety, and joint stiffness. Some may also report difficulty with swallowing, bowel and bladder abnormalities, numbness, tingling, and memory or concentration problems. Older adults with fibromyalgia tend to wake up with body aches and stiffness, for some pain improves during the day and gets worse at night, while others have pain all the time. Females are twice as likely to have FM than males.

Assessment

- Tender points found in the soft tissue on the back of the neck, shoulders, chest, lower back, hips, shins, elbows and knees. Mild to severe pain that spreads out from these areas.
- Tension or migraine headache.
- Pain that may feel like a deep ache, a shooting, or burning pain.
- Pain that feels like it is coming from the joints.
- Pain that may get worse with activity, cold or damp weather, anxiety, and stress.

Interventions

- Aim is to relieve pain and improve quality of life.
- Physical therapy, exercise, and fitness programs.
- Stress-relief methods, including light massage and relaxation techniques.
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy, and support groups.
- Acupressure and acupuncture.
- Good sleep routines to improve quality of sleep.
- Severe cases of FM may require a referral to a pain clinic.
- Medications specifically for treating FM used with exercise and behavior therapy.
 - Adjuvants – antidepressants, anticonvulsants
 - Duloxetine (Cymbalta)
 - Pregabalin (Lyrica)
 - Milnacipran (Ixel, Savella, Dalcipran, Toledomin)
 - Other drugs also used to treat the condition:
 - Pain relievers (opioids and nonopioids)
 - Cannabidiols with mild to moderate relief -limited research. Educate the older adult to tell Primary Care Provider of cannabidiols usage.
 - Muscle relaxants.
 - Melatonin – administer one to two hours before bedtime.

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References:

National Fibromyalgia Association, FM and chronic pain. The National Fibromyalgia Association. (2023, October 21). <http://fmaware.org/>

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Porter B, Marie BS, Milavetz G, Herr K. Cannabidiol (CBD) Use by Older Adults for Acute and Chronic Pain. *J Gerontol Nurs*. 2021 Jul;47(7):6-15. doi: 10.3928/00989134-20210610-02. Epub 2021 Jul 1. PMID: 34191653; PMCID: PMC8344100.