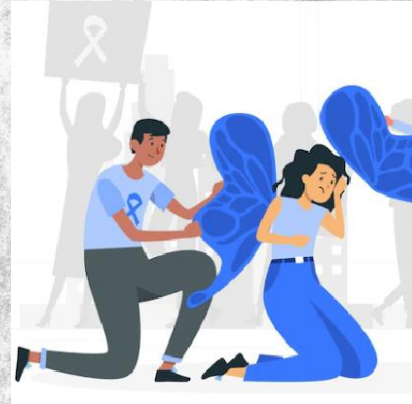
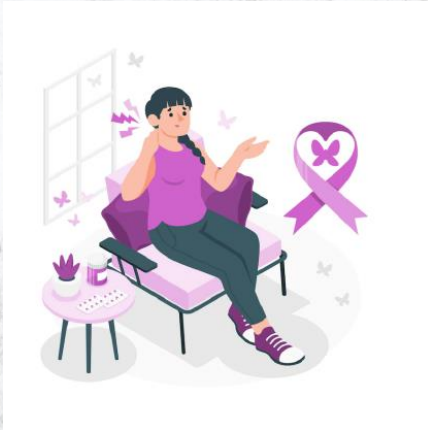


## Fibromyalgia



Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory and mood issues. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the way your brain and spinal cord process painful and nonpainful signals.

Symptoms often begin after an event, such as physical trauma, surgery, infection or significant psychological stress. In other cases, symptoms gradually accumulate over time with no single triggering event.

Women are more likely to develop fibromyalgia than are men. Many people who have fibromyalgia also have tension headaches, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety and depression.

While there is no cure for fibromyalgia, a variety of medications can help control symptoms. Exercise, relaxation and stress-reduction measures also may help.





## Symptoms

The primary symptoms of fibromyalgia include:

- **Widespread pain.** The pain associated with fibromyalgia often is described as a constant dull ache that has lasted for at least three months. To be considered widespread, the pain must occur on both sides of your body and above and below your waist.
- **Fatigue.** People with fibromyalgia often awaken tired, even though they report sleeping for long periods of time. Sleep is often disrupted by pain, and many patients with fibromyalgia have other sleep disorders, such as restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea.
- **Cognitive difficulties.** A symptom commonly referred to as "fibro fog" impairs the ability to focus, pay attention and concentrate on mental tasks.

Fibromyalgia often co-exists with other conditions, such as:

- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Migraine and other types of headaches
- Interstitial cystitis or painful bladder syndrome
- Temporomandibular joint disorders
- Anxiety
- Depression





- Postural tachycardia syndrome

## Causes

Many researchers believe that repeated nerve stimulation causes the brain and spinal cord of people with fibromyalgia to change. This change involves an abnormal increase in levels of certain chemicals in the brain that signal pain.

In addition, the brain's pain receptors seem to develop a sort of memory of the pain and become sensitized, meaning they can overreact to painful and nonpainful signals.

There are likely many factors that lead to these changes, including:

- **Genetics.** Because fibromyalgia tends to run in families, there may be certain genetic mutations that may make you more susceptible to developing the disorder.
- **Infections.** Some illnesses appear to trigger or aggravate fibromyalgia.
- **Physical or emotional events.** Fibromyalgia can sometimes be triggered by a physical event, such as a car accident. Prolonged psychological stress may also trigger the condition.





## Risk factors

Risk factors for fibromyalgia include:

- **Your sex.** Fibromyalgia is diagnosed more often in women than in men.
- **Family history.** You may be more likely to develop fibromyalgia if a parent or sibling also has the condition.
- **Other disorders.** If you have osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis or lupus, you may be more likely to develop fibromyalgia.

## Complications

The pain, fatigue, and poor sleep quality associated with fibromyalgia can interfere with your ability to function at home or on the job. The frustration of dealing with an often-misunderstood condition also can result in depression and health-related anxiety.

