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FIBROMYALGIA

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition that causes widespread pain and tenderness throughout the body, including the spine. It is not a disease of the spine itself but often affects the back, neck, and shoulders, leading to discomfort and difficulty in daily life.

Understanding fibromyalgia can help you manage its symptoms and improve your quality of life.

What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a condition that affects the way your brain and spinal cord process pain signals. This can make even mild pressure or movement feel painful. It is a chronic condition, meaning it can last for years or even a lifetime, but with proper care and treatment, symptoms can be managed effectively.

Symptoms of Fibromyalgia

Patients with fibromyalgia experience a range of symptoms, including:

- **Widespread Pain:** Pain is felt on both sides of the body and often in the spine, neck, and shoulders.
- **Fatigue:** Feeling tired even after sleeping well.
- **Sleep Problems:** Difficulty falling or staying asleep, or waking up feeling unrefreshed.
- **Cognitive Issues:** Trouble concentrating or remembering, often called "fibro fog."
- **Muscle Stiffness:** Stiffness, especially in the morning or after long periods of inactivity.
- **Headaches:** Frequent headaches or migraines.
- **Tingling or Numbness:** Sensations in the hands and feet.

Causes and Risk Factors



The exact cause of fibromyalgia is unknown, but some factors may contribute, such as:

- **Genetics:** A family history of the condition.
- **Stress or Trauma:** Physical or emotional trauma, such as an injury or major life event.
- **Infections:** Certain illnesses may trigger or worsen symptoms.
- **Gender:** Women are more likely to develop fibromyalgia.
- **Sleep Disorders:** Poor sleep can contribute to worsening symptoms.

How is Fibromyalgia Diagnosed?

Fibromyalgia is diagnosed based on your symptoms and a physical examination. Doctors may:

1. **Review Your Symptoms:** Check for widespread pain lasting more than three months.
2. **Rule Out Other Conditions:** Blood tests or imaging may be done to exclude other causes like arthritis or a spinal condition.
3. **Check Tender Points:** Specific areas of the body that are unusually sensitive may be examined.

Treatment Options

While fibromyalgia cannot be cured, it can be managed with a combination of treatments, including:

- **Medications:**
 - Pain relievers.
 - Antidepressants to improve mood and sleep.
 - Anti-seizure drugs for nerve pain.
- **Physical Therapy:**
 - Exercises to strengthen muscles and improve flexibility.
 - Postural corrections to ease back and spine discomfort.
- **Lifestyle Changes:**



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- Regular, low-impact exercise such as walking or swimming.
- Healthy diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains.
- Good sleep habits, such as maintaining a consistent sleep schedule.
- **Stress Management:**
 - Yoga, meditation, or deep-breathing exercises.
 - Counseling or support groups to cope with stress and anxiety.

Living with Fibromyalgia

Managing fibromyalgia requires patience and persistence. Here are some tips:

- **Educate Yourself:** Understanding your condition helps you make informed decisions.
- **Stay Active:** Engage in gentle exercises to keep your body flexible and reduce stiffness.
- **Seek Support:** Connect with others who have fibromyalgia for encouragement and advice.



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When to See a Specialist

If you are experiencing chronic back pain, fatigue, or other symptoms of fibromyalgia, it is important to consult a specialist. Dr. Shankar Acharya, a senior spine surgeon with 30 years of experience at Sir Gangaram Hospital, New Delhi, can provide expert guidance on managing spine-related discomfort in fibromyalgia. With the right care and treatment, it is possible to live a full and active life despite fibromyalgia.



SIR GANGA RAM HOSPITAL

Trust of Generations

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