

# INFORMATION

information



VICTORIA

inc. OSTEOPOROSIS VICTORIA

## FIBROMYALGIA SYNDROME (FMS)

### What is it?

Fibromyalgia syndrome (FMS) is a condition where pain occurs in muscles and surrounding structures without any obvious tissue damage. The pain is usually widespread.

### Why does it occur?

Currently, the cause of FMS is unknown. Researchers have suggested that FMS may be triggered by things such as viral illnesses, physical or emotional trauma, stress and depression. However for many people FMS develops gradually without any apparent cause.

### Who does it affect?

FMS affects mostly women, between the ages of 35 to 60 years, from all nationalities and culture groups. It can also affect children.

### The symptoms

The most common symptoms of FMS include any of the following:

- Pain. This may range from mild to severe, and may present in a variety of ways such as aching, burning, throbbing or stabbing.
- Stiffness, usually worse in the morning
- Sleep disturbance
- Fatigue
- Headaches.

Some people with FMS may also have symptoms such as irritable bowel syndrome, cystitis, swelling and numbness or tingling in the arms and legs

### Outlook

Medically, fibromyalgia carries a fairly good

prognosis. It does not cause joint deformity although the pain and discomfort of fibromyalgia can last for many years.

### Diagnosis

Firstly, you will need to have a full assessment by your doctor.

There are key signs that may assist the doctor in making diagnosis. These are:

1. A history of widespread pain for three months or longer
2. Abnormal tenderness in specific parts of the body

Blood tests, X-rays and other tests may be used to help exclude other conditions.

### Management

Effective management of fibromyalgia starts with a correct diagnosis. Each management program should be designed individually. Generally, management will include a combination of the following:

- Education: one of the most important components of treatment. People with fibromyalgia need to understand the condition in order to decide what treatment will be effective for their individual circumstances.
- Medication: in combination with other strategies, medication may be used to manage pain, reduce stress or promote sleep.
- Exercise: a gentle exercise program such as Tai Chi or water based exercise can have multiple benefits for the person with fibromyalgia and can assist in the management of symptoms such as pain,

fatigue and sleep disturbance.

- Stress management and relaxation techniques
- Massage.

### Education

A better understanding of FMS will greatly assist you in making decisions about the management of your condition. Arthritis Victoria's education programs can assist you to develop the skills and knowledge needed to make these decisions. They also provide opportunities to meet others in similar situations. Arthritis Victoria can also put you in touch with local support groups, other relevant organizations and appropriate exercise groups for your condition.

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

#### Resource Centre

- Littlejohn, Geoffrey and McIndoe, Rosemary (1998), *A path out of pain for fibromyalgia, soft tissue injuries and chronic pain*, Rosemary McIndoe & Geoffrey Littlejohn, Clayton. [Audio tape]
- Mondell, Dean L and Wright, Patti (2005), *Living with fibromyalgia: 4 steps to manage pain and lead a fulfilling life*, McGraw-Hill, New York NY.
- Staud, Roland and Adamec, Christine (2002), *Fibromyalgia for dummies: A reference for the rest of us!*, Wiley Publishing Inc, New York NY
- *The Arthritis Foundations guide to good living with fibromyalgia* (2001), Arthritis Foundation of America, Arthritis Foundation of America, Atlanta, GA.

*This is a small list of items the Arthritis Victoria Resource Centre holds on fibromyalgia. For a complete list, please contact the Resource Centre.*

*All listed books are available on loan from the Resource Centre to members. If you would like to find out more about becoming a member call: (03) 8531 8000.*

#### COURSES:

Arthritis Victoria Self management courses and exercise classes. Call 03 8531 8000 for information on the course or class most suited to your needs.

#### WEBSITES:

- Arthritis Vic :[www.arthritisvic.org.au](http://www.arthritisvic.org.au)
- Arthritis USA: [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org)
- National Institute for Arthritis, Musculoskeletal and Skin: [www.nih.gov/niams](http://www.nih.gov/niams)
- Medlineplus: [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)
- National Fibromyalgia Awareness Campaign: [www.fmaware.com](http://www.fmaware.com)
- Fibromyalgia Network - USA: [www.fmnetnews.com](http://www.fmnetnews.com)
- British Columbia Fibromyalgia Society: [www.alternatives.com](http://www.alternatives.com)

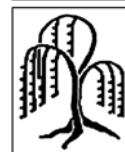
#### SUPPORT/SELF HELP GROUPS

For information about the support group nearest you, phone our Community Development Co-ordinator on (03) 8531 8000.

## ARTHRITIS VICTORIA

If you would like further information please contact our telephone information service on

**(03) 8531 8000** or **1800 011 041** (country callers)



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Prepared by Education & Services staff, Arthritis Victoria, November 2002. This material is for your information and is not intended to be medical advice. You are encouraged to review the information provided with your doctor or relevant health professional.