

Fibromyalgia Magazine

UK Fibromyalgia Year 17 · Issue 6 · April 2017



A close-up photograph of a person's knee being held by both hands. The knee joint is highlighted with a bright red, glowing effect, indicating a site of pain or inflammation. The person's skin is a light, cool-toned blue-grey. The background is plain white.

by Karen Crosby

(*As long as they are made from dark chocolate -Ed)





Saying Thank You Is Good For You

By Linda Hall

www.audiomeditation.co.uk

Linda Hall is a meditation teacher, personal development coach and audio author with over twenty years experience in the integrative healthcare field. She runs meditation and mind-body awareness courses for patients at The Optimum Health Clinic, a leading UK clinic specialising in the treatment of M.E./ C.F.S and Fibromyalgia. Her guided meditation audios for relaxation and self-growth are distributed globally.

“Gratitude opens the door to the power, and the wisdom, the creativity of the universe.”
Deepak Chopra

I was never very punctual at writing my thank you letters as a child and sometimes omitted to do them altogether! My elder brother was punctilious and prolific in his letter writing - no doubt earning more ‘gold stars’ from our various aunts and uncles than me. To this day, I still find thank you notes a bit of a chore, but common politeness coupled with a respect for the sender helps me rise above my natural reluctance, and I manage get the job done well enough. However, life has taught me there’s another type of ‘thank you’ that’s as important, if not more, and one which bestows profound benefits for the giver. There’s no need to put pen to paper, write an email or even text. It is simply to be grateful for the good things in your life.

The mind/body connection

The benefits of practicing gratitude have long been recognised in the fields of meditation and psychology. From a spiritual perspective, being thankful opens us up in the same way that negative thinking tends to close us down. It engenders a more positive, optimistic attitude towards what life offers, and allows the all-important spirit of hope to live alongside the realities of an imperfect world. From a mind/body point of view, it comes down to the simple fact that how you think and what you focus on, shapes your immediate experience and effects how you feel and behave in the future. Think of your body as an organic laboratory, constantly producing natural chemicals and hormones that perform a wide variety of tasks to keep your system running healthily. Some of these chemicals and hormones are triggered by external events and circumstances and manifest as physical sensations and emotions.

This internal chemistry orchestrates whether you feel happy, sad, angry, frustrated, relaxed, anxious and so on. It’s due to the exquisitely close relationship between the mind and the body that pleasurable thoughts induce mood enhancing endorphins and

opiates in a matter of nanoseconds, just as surely as anxious, catastrophising thoughts make you feel tense, exhausted and depressed.

The power of thinking positively

What you choose to focus your attention on, and how you engage with it, has a direct effect on your well-being and your ability to manage your symptoms and pain. Positive thinking makes it easier to see things in a more useful light and enhances well-being in general. It nurtures self-acceptance and self-kindness; both of these enable you to look after your day-to-day needs better and remove the additional stressors of self-criticism and constant self-pressure. All of this supports your body to be in a healing state.

Increasing inner well-being

Gratitude quite simply entails appreciating and giving thanks for the positives in your life. It makes good sense to take some time to regularly focus on what you have, rather than what you don’t have; on the positive things in your life - be they big or small, rather than the negative ones. It’s not about ignoring issues that should be addressed, or pushing aside feelings in need of healthy expression. It’s making informed decisions about your own health and wellbeing and choosing to change your own body chemistry, (in the moment), to a more balanced, relaxed and happy state through shifting your mindset to a resourceful, positive one. Reminding yourself as often as you can of what there is to be thankful for, will increase your sense of overall well-being, which, in turn, will have a positive effect on your symptoms and your ability to manage them. Even better, because you are training your mind and body to enter positive states, you’re supporting your long-term recovery

Mood enhancing natural pain killers

Each time you pause for a few moments to practise gratitude you tap into the benefits of what you are giving thanks for. As you bring to mind all the things in your life you appreciate and allow yourself to really enjoy the experience, your body will not only move into the relaxation response but produce mood enhancing endorphins as well.

These powerful hormones have the additional benefit of acting as natural pain killers that can stay in the body for several hours. Giving thanks is a deeply reassuring, uplifting and nourishing way to nurture yourself.

An invincible summer

For me, bringing to mind something beautiful or joyous, such as clear blue sky or a fragment of sweet birdsong, puts me directly in touch with that precious spark of life, deep within each of us that lies beneath the disturbances on our surface. It recalls a quote I cherish by the French writer and philosopher Albert Camus: *"In the midst of winter, I found there lay within me, an invincible summer. And that makes me happy. For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there's something stronger – something better, pushing right back"*

Mindfulness Day-to-Day Gratitude Exercises

1. **Every day, give thanks for something, no matter how simple or small.**
2. **Write a list of all the things you are thankful for, include:**
 - Your past and present achievements, no matter how small.
 - The wisdom and tools you've accumulated.
 - The inner resources you've developed.
 - Your support networks, including friends, family, loved ones.
 - The things that give you pleasure, no matter how simple.
 - The things, ideas and people that inspire you.
 - Anything else that you feel grateful for in your life.

It doesn't matter who or what you thank: it can be God, the Universe, your Higher Self, or something else.

Just go ahead and send out thanks. Even when you feel unwell or find things challenging, give thanks for something, no matter how small.

Meditation on Gratitude

Allow yourself to sit back, soften and ground
And come down into the ebb and flow of your breath

As you breathe in, welcome the beautiful stuff of life connecting you to the natural world outside

Allow yourself as much space as you need

Draw yourself back from where you lie scattered, to the Present Moment

And rest awhile in the simple sensations of the Here and Now

As you do so, sense the beauty of nature and give thanks for it

Give thanks for all that is good in your life

Give thanks for all that sustains and supports you

Give thanks for everything that gives you pleasure and joy

Give thanks for anything else you want to

And thank yourself for just being you

Notice what happens when you give thanks

Close

I hope you've enjoyed this article and found it useful. I wish you a good month. Go well!

Linda

at audiomeditation.co.uk

More on Practice of Gratitude:

Listen to my audio 'Feeling Good'.

Available in CD or MP3:

<http://bit.ly/28IAA3D>

Read my article

'Getting in Touch with the Positives of Life':

<http://bit.ly/2kPnPMM>

Watch my YouTube Endorphin Raising video meditation:

' <http://bit.ly/1dBSiAR>

To help you keep on track

This month's Post-It Reminder:

I'm grateful for all the good things in my life!

(Stick your Post-It reminders where you'll easily catch sight of them: the fridge door; your computer; the mirror; the back of the loo door; the front door; your bedside table).

Practical Guidance

Conscious Process: An MP3 audio programme to help manage the symptoms of M.E./Chronic Fatigue and

Fibromyalgia and support recovery. Download the first 4 Sessions Free

www.TheMeditationProgramme.com

Conscious Process is also available as a multi-media on-line course:

<http://bit.ly/1PrhORp>

Visit my on-line store for relaxation, meditation and personal growth CDs and MP3s. Mindfulness, creative visualisation, positive thinking, sleep inducer, meditation courses, blog and articles
www.AudioMeditation.co.uk

Audio Meditation's YouTube Channel

Our Guided Meditation YouTube channel now has over 1.8 million views

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Facebook: <http://bit.ly/1SvNOiL>

Twitter: <http://bit.ly/1PPFkks>

Email: info@audiomeditation.co.uk



Fibromyalgia and Sex: Part 1: The Painful Truth by Brandi Clevinger

Sex. A single syllable word that can evoke an array of emotions ranging from excitement to discontent or even hate. Three single letters coming together to form a word that has an unrelenting force strong enough to unite or destroy a relationship with virtually no assistance. The very word itself can stand on its own or be dissected and discussed for hours with varying conclusions as to what it means. What does it mean? Even that question can't be answered without a debate or argument from differing perspectives.

How can an act between two people that has been around since the beginning of time have such an effect on the way we think, feel, and react to each other?

Simply put, why does the word 'sex' affect our emotions in different ways?

For many, sex is simply a pleasurable activity to pursue because of the feelings it arouses and, hopefully, to achieve orgasm. Surprisingly though, only 75% of men reach orgasm during sex and a staggeringly low 29% of women reach orgasm ("10 Most Surprising Sex Statistics," n.d.). Even if orgasm isn't achieved, however, this group of people do it because it feels good.

Often, significant others express their love for each other through sex because words can put restraints or boundaries on those feelings. Being intimate with a partner provides a way to connect, share, and grow together as a couple. It can be engaging, provocative, and alluring all at once. It's no surprise sex is appealing to a large percentage of the population. In fact, the average man thinks about sex 19 times a day and the average woman thinks about sex 10 times a day ("Health Myth: Do Men Really Think About Sex Every 7 Seconds? | GQ," n.d.).

Just as some are attracted and excited by the thought of sex, there are some that are turned off by it. Various reasons can cause these negative associations and, for those living with fibromyalgia the very mention of the word can stir up feelings of pain, discomfort, anger, or other negative thoughts. Why?

Why is sex painful for a fibro body?

Painful Touch

Sex can be a pain – literally – for a person living with fibromyalgia. Allodynia is common when dealing with fibromyalgia: when a person experiences pain from something that shouldn't normally cause pain such as clothes, bedsheets or even air moving across the skin. Living with a sensory sensitivity causes a touch from a person to be painful no matter how gentle or caressing it's intended to be. Allodynia prevents a person from

being too close to another person making it even more difficult to have a desire for intimacy.

Pain on the Brain

No matter where pain is felt on your body, it is transmitted from the nerves to the spinal cord which is then carried to your brain. Your brain then registers the pain and causes the body to react accordingly to the pain messages received. This can be seen by quickly jerking a hand from a heat source, yelling out in pain when you stub your toe, or crying when your feelings are hurt.

With a fibro body, the sensitivity of the nerves is turned up, causing them to continuously feel pain and sending those pain signals up to the brain. The brain, in turn, concentrates on that perceived pain and coordinates the body to react to it. Since the brain is the most sensitive sex organ in the body, it makes it hard to focus on sex if our brain is constantly focused on pain.

Loss of Libido

If the negative effects of fibromyalgia on our ability to enjoy sex weren't enough, it seems like a cruel joke that the treatment could make it even worse! Currently, there are three prescribed medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat fibromyalgia: Lyrica, Cymbalta, and Savella. Antidepressants, pain relievers, muscle relaxers, antiseizure medication, and benzodiazepines have been used to ease fibromyalgia symptoms, but they are not specifically approved by the FDA for fibromyalgia.

The effectiveness of the medications as well as their side effects vary from person to person, but one of the most common side effect is the loss of libido. The reason a person's libido is affected is because of the medicine's effect on the production of brain chemicals. To relieve fibromyalgia symptoms, certain chemicals must be raised, in turn, lowering libido. Some of your symptoms may be relieved, but the tradeoff is your desire to have sex decreases or goes away altogether.

Muscle Pain and Stiffness

One of the most common symptoms of fibromyalgia is muscle stiffness, tenderness, and pain. Dr. Ginevra Liptan, founder of The Frida Center for Fibromyalgia located in the United States, states in her book, *The FibroManual: A Complete Treatment Guide for You and Your Doctor*, that the fibromyalgia brain is stuck in a stress response (Liptan, 2016, p. 20). This stress response keeps the body in a continuous state of a 'fight or flight' status. The 'fight or flight' response has our brain and sympathetic nervous system thinking it's

under attack triggering many reactions in our bodies to happen or to prevent them from happening. One of the reactions that stays on is the tension of our muscles.

Constantly tensed muscles can leave a person feeling fatigued and stiff throughout the entire body. Sex is an active exercise that requires flexibility and the use of various muscle groups. The muscle pain and stiffness can prevent a person from enjoying sex or being able to move with ease and free of pain. The results of an intimate session in the days following sex is often an increase in symptoms, or flares.

Difficulty with Sexual Performance

All the reasons listed up to this point tell why people living with fibromyalgia have little to no desire to be intimate with another person, and will, have an impact on their sexual performance. A person can feel pressure to have sex from their partner, although many times that pressure is unintentional. Thinking about pleasing and not disappointing the other person on top of struggling with the pain of having intercourse during and the days following can impact sexual performance. It's natural to have these feelings, and they shouldn't discourage someone living with fibromyalgia, or his/her partner, from further attempts at enjoying sex.

What are the health benefits of sex?

Even though sex may cause you or your partner pain, there are reasons you should consider having a healthy sex life. And, yes, there are ways to have a sex life and ways to improve it, but let's discuss why it's important.

Strengthens Your Relationship

As stated in the introduction, sex is a means in which many couples can express their affection for one another. When words fall short of that expression of love, we turn to intimacy and the closeness it can bring. In many instances, sex takes the relationship to a new level of connection and understanding. Communication lines open and couples can better receive what their partner's verbal and nonverbal cues. These benefits remain even after the sex is over.

Strengthens Your Body

Yes, you read that correctly. Sex is an exercise, and like all exercises you burn calories while doing it. Pun not intended. According to research done by the University of Montreal provided by Men's Health, men burn 100 calories for an average sex session of 25 minutes while women burn 69 calories ("Sex Workout," n.d.). And the longer the session, the more calories burned. Having sex also elevates your heart rate which keeps estrogen and testosterone levels in balance. Done regularly, it will decrease chances of heart disease and osteoporosis.

Eases Pain

Endorphins are the body's natural painkillers that decrease and increase a body's overall well-being. These feel-good brain chemicals are released through

various activities such as exercising and - yep, you got it - sex. Once endorphins are released to the pain receptors in the brain and spinal cord, they block pain signal transmissions. This lowers the perceived amount of pain for a given stimulus, and can prevent pain altogether. This is especially beneficial for someone living with fibromyalgia.

Orgasms can also relieve pain. When a body reaches its moment of climax, it releases a hormone called oxytocin which not only eases pain, but also lowers blood pressure, improves digestion, and makes us happy. Science has proven it - orgasms make a person happy!

Improves Your Sleep

In addition to the release of oxytocin, an orgasm also releases hormones called prolactin and vasopressin which are responsible for feelings of relaxation and sleepiness. With multiple hormones being released to relax the body, it's no wonder we have the need to fall asleep after a good romp session.

Reduces Stress

Having a healthy sex life can help lower stress and improve overall well-being. Aside from the previously mentioned hormones that aid in lowering stress and improving relaxation, the physical closeness between partners during sex can also lower stress and anxiety. The welcome touching and caressing from your partner can release the body's natural feel-good hormones which redirects your focus away from negativity and stress. This boosts self-esteem and can make a person happier.

Ways to improve sex

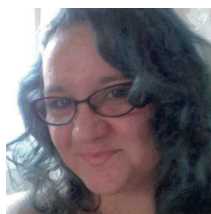
Even if sex is a painful experience for you, whether physically or emotionally, there are ways to make it better. There are also techniques to create a sex life if one is lacking. Sex can become a pleasurable experience that both partners look forward to.

Please join us in next month's issue as we discuss the ways to turn painful sex into pleasurable sex in Fibromyalgia and Sex: Part 2: Turning the Pain into Pleasure.

I am the writer and creator of Being Fibro Mom (www.BeingFibroMom.com) as well as a member of the Board of Directors and Fibro Parenting program director for the non-profit organization Support Fibromyalgia.

I am a follower of Christ, wife to a supportive husband, mother to four sweet children, and a fibromyalgia thriver. Being Fibro Mom was created in 2013 with the hope of helping fibromyalgia sufferers become fibromyalgia thrivers.

My mission is to advocate for parents while enduring the hardships of fibromyalgia.



Stop putting it off due to illness.

By Naomi Harvey

We all have something in our drawer's or wardrobe for a "special occasion", something we always plan to wear on the perfect occasion, or put aside for a rainy day. The trouble with that though is how much will we put off things in the hopes of getting better? For me it was a beautiful corset, a stunning black and red one that I had never worn as was waiting for the "right" time. Only due to my health that time never came, I was either too tired, too sick or in too much pain, and over time that corset just became too big, I had lost the weight and it no longer fit, that's a great thing to happen when actively losing weight but not my point. I put off wearing it waiting for perfect time and unfortunately that time never came.



We all do this though we put things off, we wait and suddenly we are missing the things that pass us by. Chronic illness can take so much from us so its about time for us to start making the most we can with what we do have. Time is very short, in anyone's life so make the most of your good days.

I am by no means encouraging you to over do it on the days where you can do a bit more, but to do more of the things you enjoy when you can. The hooovering, the housework, will always be there for the next "OK" day, but your kids day in the park, a trip out, a meal with loved ones, they may not always be an option. Your kids will grow up all too fast, and they wont remember a dusty home, but the days spent making you laugh and the love you share. Your partner may want to spoil you, and you them, so let it happen, even if it is rare you are up to it make sure when you can you do. We only have a few good days a month, if we are lucky, so why spend

the good days doing the things we can spread out over the not so good?

The old adage "Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today" is surprisingly useful here. While intended to be for workers in order to keep organised it lends itself very well to the idea of chronic illness, we all have those days where we do actually feel good, but are so scared of triggering a flare, or that the pay back for any kind of activity will be too high, that we miss out on so much. For years I would put off spending time with family knowing I would wont to play games with my nieces and nephews. I was so scared of the pay back I missed out on so much fun and love, now I try my hardest to make the most of the time I can spend with them. I rarely miss out on family time now but make sure to pace what I do when I can to help keep the payback low.

Do what you need to do vs what you think is expected of you, we all push ourselves harder and faster then anyone else would ever expect of us as we honestly believe that is what we should be doing. This isn't the case though, people expect us to our best and yet we push further. Time and again we need to put ourselves first and if we can't do more than our normal then why do we push ourselves further then we would ever push another? Enjoy the things you can do, while you can and don't keep pushing yourself so far that the enjoyment is overshadowed by the pay back after it.

We have so little in life that we can still enjoy, so make the most of the good days in order to start living again. Pain and illness can limit it us but it shouldn't remove our enjoyment on the good days.

<http://crackedbroken.blogspot.co.uk/>

NEW FIBROMYALGIA MEDICAL DEVICE ANNOUNCED:

CE approval for the treatment of fibromyalgia was just granted for the AVACEN 100. Approval was based on a Clinical Evaluation Report which highlighted AVACEN Medical's very promising 22-person fibromyalgia study. One hundred percent (100%) positive results were recorded for the full therapeutic treatment group. The AVACEN study was conducted under a Cooperative Research Development Agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs at the University of California San Diego Center for Pain Medicine, Perlman Medical Center and the VA Medical Center, San Diego. The So-

ciety for Neuroscience 2013 Annual Meeting abstract program disclosed the 28-day AVACEN follow-up study produced a statistically significant reduction of over 40% in the widespread pain index and a reduction in average tender point counts from approximately 15 to 9 (11 is used for clinical assessment). Study details are published on the National Institutes of Health – ClinicalTrials.gov website. AVACEN Medical has a 30-day 100% money-back-guarantee. In addition, they are running an Introductory promotion whereby they pay the VAT www.AVACEN.com/novat



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APRIL 2017 Introductory Offer

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Free Craft Product Advertising at the Fibromyalgia Shop

The Fibromyalgia Shop
<http://tinyurl.com/hao4wy3>

is offering you free advertising. So gather up all those handmade crafts and make a little pocket money! Once you have placed your advert, we will automatically copy your advert over to our UKFM shop Facebook page too!

If you haven't liked it already pop over and have a look!

<http://tinyurl.com/grz3bmq>

Eating Easter Eggs are good for Fibromyalgia*

(*As long as they are made from dark chocolate –Ed)

Many people crave chocolate, and up until now they were told to avoid giving in to too many chocolate cravings because, like all candy, chocolate is bad for you since it contains so much refined sugar. However, dark chocolate does not contain the same amount of milk or sugar as milk chocolate, and scientists are now finding that dark chocolate may have some benefits to your health. While you should never overdo it, it may not be so bad to give in to a chocolate craving once in a while with a little bit of organically grown, hand made dark chocolate.



Chocolate Benefits

It has now been found that dark chocolate may be good for your health. One study found that cocoa helps your body produce nitric oxide, which is important for blood flow and blood pressure. It works similarly to low-dose aspirin in promoting a healthy blood flow (with the exception that the effects of aspirin are longer lasting).

Cocoa also contains many flavanoids (that are called flavonols in chocolate), which are plant compounds with high antioxidant properties. These prevent wear-and-tear damage on your cells. Also, the flavonols in cocoa prevent fat-like substances in the bloodstream from clogging arteries.

Tryptophan and cannabinoids found in dark chocolate can also reduce anxiety and promote relaxation, while the stimulants theobromine, caffeine, tyramine and phenylethylamine (PEA) in cocoa provide an individual with a much-needed lift. Cocoa may also trigger the brain's natural opiates, which can relieve pain and promote a feeling of well-being.

Why Chocolate May Not Be All That Good

While cocoa does contain tryptophan, cannabinoids, theobromine, caffeine, tyramine and phenylethylamine, it does not contain as much as some other foods. For example, a cup of coffee contains a lot more caffeine than a bar of chocolate. In this case, eating a bar of chocolate may not provide the psychological effects that these components promise. However, combined with other foods that contain these things, a more noticeable effect may be present.

Another concern is that much of the active health-promoting ingredients in cocoa are destroyed during the production of chocolate. So the potential chocolate has for your health becomes less with more processing. Chocolate production companies today are looking for ways to minimize the losses of these chemicals.

Finally, if you do want to get any possible benefits from chocolate, it matters what kind of chocolate you eat. Avoid milk chocolate and chocolate sold as candy, since these contain high percentages of milk and refined sugar. Instead, look for dark chocolates with high cocoa content (65% or higher) that are grown organically and made with as little processing as possible, such as by hand.

<http://www.fibromyalgiatreating.com>

The Fibromyalgia Exercise Guide

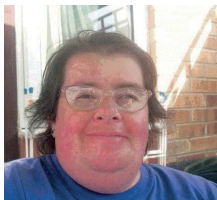
by David Jenkin

The guide is designed to teach people how to be active managers of their health in relation to living with Fibromyalgia.

£14.95 including post and packing to a UK postcode.

To order ring

01202 259155

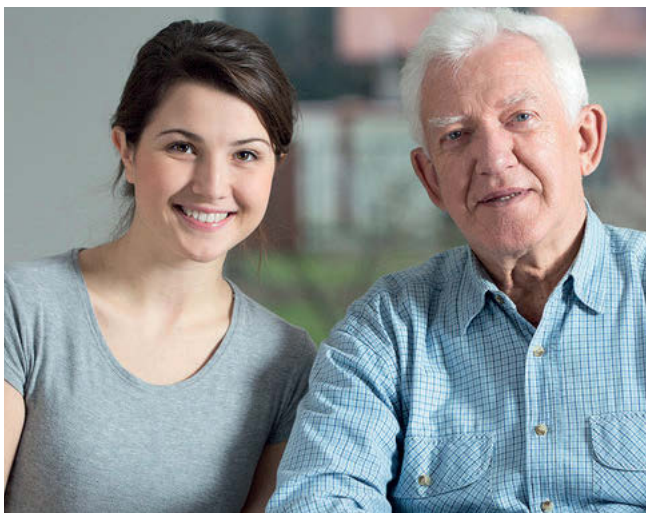


CARERS

By Helen Watts

I have recently been wondering how many of our Facebook members have Carers and how they helped so I posed that very question on the group.

'JFS' replied "I am lucky enough to get care via a direct payment from Social Services. I get 9 hours a week, and it's supposed to cover: washing and bathing; food shopping, prep, cooking, and encouragement/support with eating and clearing up; medical appointments attendance and support; medication collection, dispensing and help/reminders to take it; basic home help/heavy domestic tasks; help with physio and swimming - getting there, changed, in the pool, exercises done, out, dry and changed; AND some 'social and community' activities/support. Needless to say, it really doesn't go that far. Mostly it's used on heavy domestic tasks and food prep. I love my PA to bits, she does an amazing job and wishes she could do everything I need - she's happy to go over her hours but I won't let her; she's far too precious to be working for nowt. I insist on calling her my PA and not my carer; in my view a personal assistant does things with or for you whereas a carer does things to you or instead of you".



'KSH' commented "I'm the same I have direct payments. I would be lost without it. I have lots of other ailments other than FM. We are lucky but the way things are going this may not last so I'm making the most of it. I would be worse without it. Quality of life is so so important".

'SCM' replied "My children and partner help when it's bad, other than that I don't have a carer".

'KP' said "My eldest used to but he needs his own life so they help now other than that I do it".

'KL' commented "I have carers, my hubby's my full time carer, but needs a break, so I have carers in the day, 3 days a week and have 3 overnights so he can get some sleep as I have seizures".

'HW' said "My parents are my carers but it is usually my mum who is my full time carer, she helps me wash and dress my lower half, she cooks and prepares my meals, washes clothes, cleans the house and she helps me outside the house as I can't go out alone".

'AW' replied "I have 3 main carers Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. They come in at 2pm to make me a sandwich and a cup of tea they then empty and clean my commode. They come back at 5.30pm to get my meal out of the oven, plate it and give it to me. On Thursday one of them comes at 1.30pm she makes my sandwich does the commode, then she cleans the house, makes a meal for my evening meal and puts it in the slow cooker, she is here till 4pm. On Friday they come at 2pm and do the sandwich and commode, then they do anything that wasn't done the day before or change my bed. Some times it's hard to get up and put the meal in the oven but I try".

'TB' added "I call my team support workers, I have 28 hours per week now, most of which I pay for myself. Washing, dressing, getting up, going to bed, showering, catheter care, pressure sore care, meds through a picc line, amongst a lot of other things I need support in. I have 24 hour care between my husband / my support workers. I don't have this in place due to fibromyalgia although obviously it's a big part of my needs".

So some great answers there, do you have Carers? Come along to the Facebook group and share.

Helen Watts



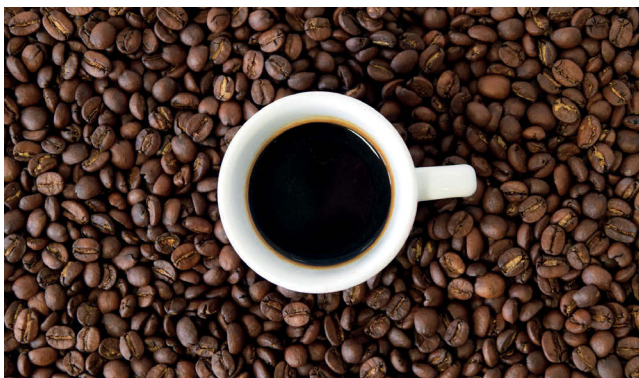
Fatigue Fighting Foods

by Emma Stark

Hippocrates made such an effort every day on top of other fibromyalgia symptoms can be such hard work. It's often too easy to grab a cup of coffee or other caffeine high drinks to try ease the tiredness slightly. However, always going for the quick option will cause further problems in the long run. This month I would like to help get you guys on the path to increasing your energy and managing the fatigue that bit better.

When it comes to nutritional therapy there is no quick fix, it's all about making changes that work for you and keeping to them. By eating the right foods at the right time should help keep a steady flow of energy and stop the peaks and troughs of energy.

I'd like to cover three main points that will hopefully help each one of us improve our energy levels.



1. Avoid adrenal stimulants

Adrenal stimulants exacerbate symptoms of those of us who have fibromyalgia so while a sugar or caffeine rush might help you shake the fatigue in the morning, its constant 'firing' of the brain synapses can lead to less energy later in the day, even if you consume more caffeine. This then leaves the risk of being even more tired later as well as having difficulty trying to sleep, which then can increase your pain levels for the next day too.

2. Eat little and often

I think this one takes a bit of practice and getting used to but can be one of the most important steps to help with energy and fatigue. I know I can be bad for waiting until I'm super hungry then eating too much and feeling more tired than I did to begin with. By eating little and often it can help your body in several ways. Firstly, it's a good way to manage your weight as it keeps your metabolism from slowing

down too much. It also makes you less likely to reach for something quick, convenient and unhealthy as you haven't waited to the stage where you're too hungry and just want something to fill you fast. By avoiding the adrenal stimulants and swapping for some slow release carbohydrates you are going to feel the benefit of continued steady energy. No more sugar crash, which should make pacing yourself that little bit easier.

Good slow release carbohydrates to eat are:

Quinoa – This grain is packed with protein and more readily available in shops. It delivers slow release energy and contains manganese, magnesium and copper.

Sweet Potato – Such a good source of slow release carbs but have some of these roasted and it also helps conquer sweet cravings without feeling the fatigue later. Also, a good form of fibre, vitamins A, C and B6.

Porridge – One of the most effective slow release carbs helps you feel fuller for longer and helps boost your immune system. For a little twist try making some overnight oats. In the morning, it almost feels like a cheat it's so nice. Good way to start the day!



Green veg – Brussel sprouts, kale, spinach, broccoli, cabbage, green beans are all great non-starchy, slow release carbohydrates that will also give you a boost of antioxidants helping your body eliminate toxins and keep free radicals at bay!

Beans – Cannellini beans, red kidney beans, borlotti beans, black beans are all very nutritious. Not only will they fill you up and keep you fuller for longer, they each help keep you healthy and strong. Be careful to avoid preservatives and look at your labels on tins. If in doubt, buy dried and boil them up.

Lentils – This super pulse contains so many vitamins and minerals for overall health but they are high in B vitamins and Iron which help fight the fatigue too. Lentil Dahl is also a good comfort food or a good heart-warming bowl of lentil soup.

3. Nutrients needed for energy production

Last month I went over certain nutrients which help to reduce pain and inflammation. The good news is that a lot of the nutrients that help with pain also help with energy production. I'm going to explain why these nutrients help and give plenty examples of foods high in each nutrient.

Vitamin C is one of the most important nutrients that will help with the battle of fatigue as vitamin c is responsible for turning food into energy. It also strengthens the immune system and helps fight infection which is super important for us and our never shifting bugs! On top of this it also creates anti-stress hormones! Considering stress can cause relapses with fibromyalgia, anything to help with stress, to me, is a bonus.

Vitamin C rich foods - Broccoli, peppers, watercress, cabbage, cauliflower, strawberries, oranges, tomatoes, kiwi fruit, lemons, grapefruit.

B Vitamins help with a whole host of fibromyalgia symptoms. B1 is essential for energy production, brain function and digestion, three factors that we could use some help! B2 helps turn fats, sugars and protein into energy ensuring that if we eat good, we feel good. B3 is another vitamin essential for energy production, brain function and the skin but also helps balance blood sugar and lower cholesterol levels, reduce inflammation and aid digestion. B5 is involved in energy production, controls fat metabolism and helps make anti stress hormones. B6 is a natural anti-depressant and diuretic and B12 helps get rid of toxins and helps the blood carry oxygen.

B Vitamin rich foods - Watercress, squash, courgette, lamb, asparagus, mushrooms, cabbage, broccoli, tuna, chicken, salmon, peas, lentils, cauliflower, bananas, oysters, sardines, tuna.

Iron is vital for energy production; a deficiency can replicate a lot of our fibro symptoms which means that we can go for months with an iron deficiency without knowing. Signs of a deficiency include anaemia, pale skin, sore tongue, fatigue, appetite loss, nausea and a sensitivity to cold. So, I'm sure you can all agree that this is a top one to add to the diet!

Iron rich foods – Pumpkin seeds, parsley, almonds, prunes, cashew nuts, raisins, brazil nuts, walnuts, dates, pork, cooked dried beans, sesame seeds, pecan nuts.

Magnesium is a super nutrient when it comes to fibromyalgia. It's another essential nutrient for energy production and immune system health which is important. But, it also helps strengthen bones and teeth, promotes healthy muscles and helps them relax and helps the nervous system. I'm sure reading this makes it clear as to why it's a common supplement for fibromyalgia patients.

Magnesium rich foods - Pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, wheat germ, almonds, cashew nuts, brazil nuts, peanuts.

Try to incorporate some of these foods into your diet when you can. Eating little and often will help as you can vary what you are eating a lot easier than trying to fit all these things into 3 meals a day. If you aim for 5 – 6 small meals per day, you should find after around two weeks that you will have more energy than you are used to.

Changing how you eat can be hard work to begin with, making new recipes and cooking using ingredients you're unfamiliar with can seem like a diet. Make it fun! Find new favourite foods and enjoy eating healthy. After a few weeks, it will seem like normal and you'll start to enjoy feeling a reduction in some of the awful symptoms we must deal with.

I'm interested to hear how everyone is getting on with the changes in diet. Any questions, or if you want to share what's worked for you, please get in contact.

Emma qualified as a nutritional therapist after struggling to deal with the symptoms of fibromyalgia and M.E. She has previous experience of strength and conditioning from being a rugby coach for years before becoming a mortgage advisor and having to leave her job for health reasons. Now she is committed to helping others with what she has learned and continuing recovery.



The Minute You Walked On The Joint!

by Karen Crosby

Fibromyalgia – the word comes from the Latin for fibrous tissue “fibro” and the Greek one for muscle “myo” and the last part means pain “algia”.

For me, this caused confusion when I was diagnosed. Firstly, like most of us I was diagnosed by a rheumatologist, after lots of questions and a test on my trigger points, then I was given a list of medication for my GP as to what to try for the condition. When I looked up the word, as you can see it means pain in the muscles (also known as fibrous tissue).

While this is true, I was confused as to why my joints were painful and sometimes swollen.

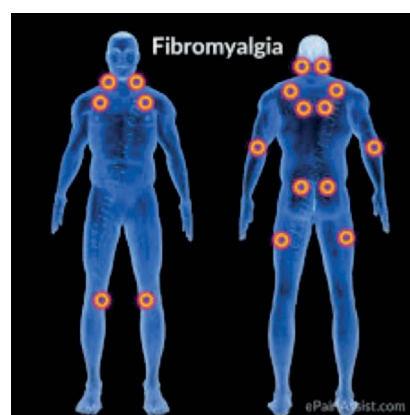
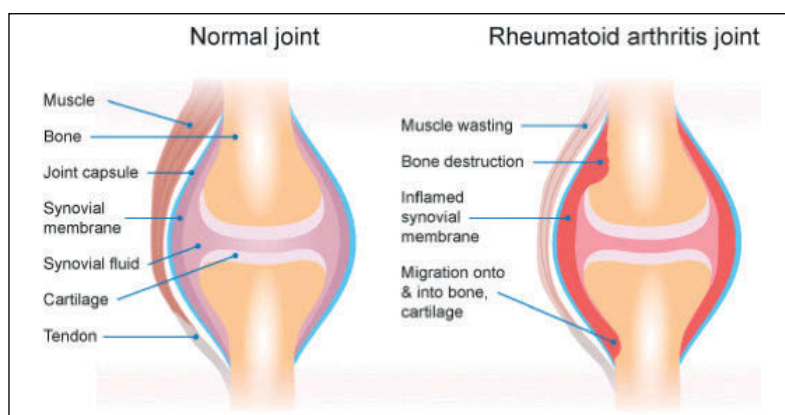
I had x-rays on my hands and feet before being sent to the rheumatologist, because my GP wanted to rule out any arthritis which IS a condition causing damage and inflammation to the joints.

When the x-rays showed no damage to my hands and feet (these were the particular areas of pain at that time), he said he knew what I had but wanted the specialist to confirm it (unfortunately he was right).

Fibro is related to arthritis because of the widespread pain in the joints and fatigue, but is not damaging to the joints or muscles.

Also, like arthritis, it is considered a rheumatic condition because it is a condition causing problems in the joints as well as the muscles resulting in long-term (chronic) pain.

Let us look at the main differences between rheumatoid arthritis and fibro, and consider why one is often suspected for the other because some symptoms are similar or the same!



Rheumatoid Arthritis Symptoms	Fibromyalgia Symptoms	Symptoms from Both RA and Fibro
Inflammation in the joints - intermittent	Widespread muscle and soft tissue pain	Pain and aching around joints
Pain can last 6 weeks	Pain lasts more than 3 months	Morning stiffness
Damage to joints	Does not damage joints or muscles	Joint pain and tenderness
Some daytime sleepiness (women)	Greater daytime sleepiness (women)	Sleep disturbances
Fatigue caused by inflammation and anaemia	Fatigue caused by not enough deep restorative sleep	General fatigue
Swollen, inflamed joints in hands and feet	Specific tender points in knees, elbows, collarbone, back of the head, upper back and base of spine (buttocks)	Some symmetrical pain in pairs of joints (I have both sides sometimes)
Impairment of muscles and joints	Does not damage joints or muscles	Depression
Progressive damage without treatment	Not a degenerative condition	Sensitive to light in the eyes
Swollen Glands - inflammation	Swollen Glands – Sluggish Lymph	

Fibromyalgia has its own set of distinctive and common symptoms not associated with rheumatoid arthritis: -

1. Short-term memory loss called fibro fog.
2. Restless leg syndrome.
3. Sensitivity to loud noises, temperature changes and bright lights (although the inflammation with RA can cause light sensitivity and vision damage).
4. Numbness, tingling and a wide range of different pain like muscle spasms and shooting pains.
5. Headaches.
6. Irritable bowel syndrome.

Of course there is a lot more to fibro than these symptoms as we already know.

The pain associated with both conditions differs: -

Pain with RA is caused by inflammation in the joints, but usually on both sides of the body i.e.: - both hands, or both feet, whereas fibro pain is widespread around the body and can be in many places at once, but sometimes only one side of the body is affected so is less symmetrical.

Diagnosis for RA is a lot easier than fibromyalgia. With RA there are inflammatory markers in the blood and the joint damage is seen on x-rays.

With fibro all this is ruled out first and the trigger points are pressed for the diagnosis, so there is no pathological test for fibro like there is for RA. Also there are more visual symptoms for RA on the outer body like redness on the joints affected, and nodules often form making it easier to see. It is very important to start treatment with RA as it can cause long-term damage to the internal organs if left untreated, whereas treatment for fibro is more a case of seeing what helps and trial and error, or some people with fibro (like me) choose to be medication free (I know this is not easy however, I am not saying it is, but it is often a case of a personal choice).

I hope this has gone a long way to explain the joint pain we get with fibro and that it is very different to RA, but as I always say – always check with your GP or specialist if you suspect either one, just to be on the safe side!

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Ring 01202 259155 to find out more.





Do You Feel Deprived on a Fibromyalgia Diet? By Sue Ingebretson

Author of, *FibroWHYalgia* www.RebuildingWellness.com

Does the word, diet make you think of deprivation? After all, the first three letters spell out the word, D-I-E don't they? No wonder we naturally want to avoid it.

Starting nutritional changes can be a challenge. It makes sense to start where we feel that challenge the most – in the gut.

Fibromyalgia and food sensitivities go hand in hand like burning buildings and fire trucks. Where there's fibromyalgia ... there's food sensitivities. That means some foods need to be weeded from the diet in order to create an environment of healing. The most common food-related culprits are wheat/gluten, processed dairy, sugar, soy, corn, chemical food additives, eggs, artificial sweeteners, and MSG.



In my practice, a vast majority of my clients demonstrate sensitivities to each and all of these “foods” with varying degrees. There is one exception. Some may have problems consuming eggs, others do not.

It's important to note that I'm using the term “sensitivities” here, in a general way. It's meant to encompass all definitions of intolerances that may affect digestion, energy levels, skin conditions, congestion, and more. I'm doing so to differentiate from the clinical description of food allergies that can cause anaphylactic shock and other life-threatening and dire symptoms.

When it comes to making meal time changes, have you experimented with weeding out these sources of inflammation and intestinal chaos? It can start as simply as switching from consuming processed and packaged foods to eating whole, fresh foods. If you're not sure which foods pose the biggest problems for you, I'd suggest working with a holistic health nutritionist, a specialist in food sensitivities, or doing a simple elimination diet at home. Experimenting with elimination diets is how I ferreted out most of my own food sensitivities.

Once you begin to notice problematic ingredients, you

may be surprised to see how prevalent they are in your current diet. Here's the biggest problem that I see when clients initially begin this process. It's not that they consume problematic foods – it's that **most** of what they consume are problematic foods.

If you're sensitive to or intolerant of the majority of what you eat, then what? Do you feel like everything is taken away? If so, that's a recipe for a diet disaster.

Do a quick analysis of what you eat most. Does nearly everything come from a bag, package, box, can, or from a takeout container? If so, that's an observable indication that the foods you're consuming may contribute to your health challenges – including pain.

Inflammation-causing foods create a chain reaction of symptoms. It's understandable that removing these foods leaves a void in your everyday meals. But here's where you can amplify your success – choose to focus on what you're adding to your meal plans rather than on what you're subtracting.

What you're adding is an abundance of life-giving foods.

The body craves essential nutrients. When the foods we eat are primarily empty-nutrient foods (packaged, processed, chemically enhanced, etc.), the body becomes malnourished. And, how does the body react to malnourishment?

Hunger!

When the body doesn't find the nutrients it needs in the foods you eat, it's only recourse is to send out hunger signals for more. It simply wants more and more food.

But more of what? Empty-nutrient foods can never satisfy.

When the body obtains the essential nutrients it's looking for in whole, natural, nutrient-dense and fiber-rich foods ... hunger diminishes.

It's as simple as this – consume essential macronutrients. The core of what the body needs to survive are: Healthy proteins, healthy fats, and veggies. When we add healthy foods to our meal plans, we actually expand our options of foods to eat. We can choose to eat from an abundance of foods rather than a small selection.

Why we tend to think small.

It's common in today's food culture to practice limited thinking patterns. We limit our daily foods to the same things day in, day out. We stock up at big box stores and buy convenience foods in bulk.

Then we slowly but surely power through these packaged foods for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

In contrast, there are thousands of veggie options to try. Yet most of us can only list the basics such as peas, green beans, carrots, celery, and lettuce. (Think I forgot to mention corn? Corn is actually a grain - not a vegetable. It's no coincidence that corn is one of the most common ingredients in packaged foods and also tops the list of inflammation-causing foods.)

Are you ready to make the shift? Shift away from packaged foods and toward natural foods. In all honesty, this transition period can be uncomfortable – but only at first. It's human nature to continue doing what we've always done. To instigate change takes thought and intention.

As a collective fibromyalgia community, making healthy lifestyle changes needs to become a burning desire. We can always find reasons to stay where we are. But if symptoms are not improving, then it's time to embrace change and look for other solutions.

Do you have a deprivation mindset?

Let's see if any of these tendencies are familiar. Do you compare yourself to others? Do you find yourself feeling angry or resentful of others who've met with any kind of health success? Do you find reasons why healthy changes work for others but not for you? And, here's an important question -- do you find yourself automatically focusing on what you don't have rather than on what you do?

If you answered yes to some or even most of these, a deprivation mindset may be an issue for you. If so, you're in good company. Most of us feel this way at some point. When it comes to foods especially, it's common to focus on lack rather than abundance.

It's time for change.

Education is the first step. When we learn more about nutrition, body movement, and stress-management, we can't help but change how we think about them. The exciting part is that new ideas spur new behaviors.

While change can be uncomfortable. Most of us – at some point -- realize we're more uncomfortable where we are than with the uncertainty of change.

And, that's how change happens.

CHANGE: One small step at a time.

How you think about change brings you either stagnation or success.

Are you on a diet?

Isn't diet a repulsive word? As we mentioned at the beginning of this article, it sounds nearly fatal. At best, it's constricting, temporary, and limiting. Changing your nutrition plan begins with removing the notion that you're on a diet. You're not. You've decided to make lifestyle changes for a healthier future. Focus instead on your nutritional plan.

This is the first hurdle to overcome. Changing your language around your choices can mean the difference between feeling empowered or feeling restricted. You're not on a temporary diet. You're on a life-long, nutrient-rich, body-enhancing nutrition plan.

Next simply acknowledge that starting new lifestyle changes takes effort. Here's the interesting thing about effort. At the beginning, it takes time to learn something new. It takes effort to practice it often enough to make it a habit. It takes a temporary period of extra focus. For example, when you first learned to ride a bike or drive a car, it took extra focus. It may have seemed overwhelming. However, with time, practice, and patience, it became second nature.

While embracing change isn't effortless, it's definitely worth the effort. Soon you'll find yourself having fun in the kitchen experimenting with new foods and new flavor combinations. Focus on the fun and creative side of nutrition.

I hope you now see that deprivation holds no power over someone who feels their healthy options are limitless. When it comes to making healthier choices – **expand your natural food horizons!** Visit your local produce store, farmer's market, or online natural food vendor. Download veggie apps that fuel your knowledge of new and exciting foods to try.

With knowledge, focus, and a burning desire for change, your nutritional world can feel rich and expansive. Doing so crowds out any potential for feelings of deprivation.

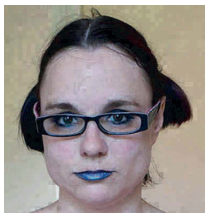
Are you ready to make this shift in your thinking? Thoughts turn into actions. Therefore, thoughts of increased options will increase your body's ability to heal.

Sue Ingebretson (www.RebuildingWellness.com) is an author, speaker, certified holistic health care practitioner and the director of program development for the Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain Center at California State University, Fullerton. She is also a Natural Health Editor for the ProHealth.com fibromyalgia website community.

Her #1 Amazon best-selling chronic illness book, FibroWHYalgia, details her personal journey from chronic illness to chronic wellness.

Would you like to find out how stress is impacting your life? Sign up for Sue's free Is Stress Making You Sick guide.

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The Benefits Agony Aunt

by Nim McCoan-Thornhill

ESA & PIP Problems

Welcome to the monthly benefits problem column for people with Fibromyalgia. The essential focus is PIP and ESA, but if you've other problems, do please also bring them to my table and I will do my best for you. In order to submit your problems please email office@fibromyalgia.com.

This month we are helping a lady who needs help with a request for reconsideration following a disastrous Work Capability Assessment.

Dear Nim,

I have failed a work capability assessment, and I am preparing my Mandate Reconsideration letter. Last week an advice service offered some help, but it was too general and does not seem to be helpful when tackling such a fluctuating condition as Fibromyalgia. Please can you offer some ideas or help.

Kind regards, Lucy

Dear Lucy,

I am sorry to hear that you failed the WCA. You're on the right track by the sound of it, though. If you have not done so already, contact the DWP. There should be a number on the letter to contact them with. If there is not, use the general enquiries number: 0800 055 6688. When you speak to them:

- Request a **Mandatory Reconsideration**.
- Request the form **SSCS1**, and the leaflet **SSCS1A**. (This is the appeal form, and guiding leaflet).
- Request the **ESA85 WCA Report**. (This is the report from the Work Capability Assessment).
- Request the **ESA85** Decision Markers Score Sheet.
- Request the **ESA65** Disallowance Notice.
- Request the **ESA113**. (This is the form they send to your GP: usually it will simply show that they did not do so).
- Request all the medical evidence the Health Care Professional used to make their opinion.
- Request all the medical evidence the Decision Makers Office used to make their decision.

While you wait for all of this information to arrive from them, review the medical evidence you used in your application. Ideally you will have a letter from your personal GP, letters from specialists, the results from abnormal blood tests and any other tests you've had, and supporting letters from people who are familiar with your condition on a day to day basis. If you don't have much evidence, use this time to request more; you can send it in with your Mandatory Reconsideration letter.

Once the paperwork from the DWP arrives, read through it, highlighting the points that you disagree with. Compare these points with your medical evidence and what you've said in your ESA50. Then construct the letter using a format similar to that below:

1) *It has been stated that I do not need help to avoid danger, with asking or following directions, because of anxiety or panic attacks, and that I don't need guiding or supervising when walking outside on unfamiliar routes.*

- My form states in sections 31, 33, 40, 43, 46, 53 that I suffer with panic attacks, that it is dangerous for me to be alone outdoors, and that I am at risk of having falls.
- The report drawn up by the medical professional who examined me for ESA has note of my history of anxiety.
- The letter sent as supporting evidence from my boyfriend also describes anxiety and panic attacks.

If you have succeeded in accumulating more evidence than you previously had, don't be afraid to refer to the specifics of it in your Mandatory Reconsideration.

An alternative suggestion in these circumstances, if you previously had no medical evidence to accompany your ESA50 form, is to start the entire claim anew. Use an advocate to help you complete the form, and be sure to have supporting letters. Two claims can run along side one another; if the second claim is successful before the first is seen to, one simply contacts the DWP to cancel the unsuccessful claim.

I hope this advice is of help to you.

Nim.

Disability costs must be covered before applying £30 ESA cut say MPs

In a cross-party report published 3 February 2017, the Work and Pensions Committee says that, if the Department is to press ahead with introducing a lower rate of benefit for new claimants of the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work-Related Activity Group (WRAG) it must first have set out a clear plan for identifying where new claimants have additional, unavoidable living costs relating to their conditions, and how it will ensure that these costs are covered.

Commenting on the Work and Pensions select committee report on disability employment published on 3 February, Liz Sayce, CEO of Disability Rights UK, said:

'The select committee is right to highlight the forthcoming cuts to Employment Support Allowance as wrong in principle and ineffective in practice.

'We're not aware of one single disability employment or benefits expert who thinks this particular cut will be an incentive for disabled people to get a job. The House of Lords twice tried to get this damaging cut reversed, but to no avail.

'Whilst there are many ideas in the government's green paper to be welcomed, the select committee report says much more is needed and the government must be pragmatic about any plans to close the disability employment gap. Many disabled people could and would work, if they got the right specialist support and employers were more open to employing them.'

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>



New Fibromyalgia Groups Information

Coleraine, Northern Ireland

The regional support group meets on last Friday of each month, in Rathain Fold Union Street, Coleraine, from 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Contact details for the group is Debbie Davis.

Telephone: 07513202755

Email: debs_47@hotmail.co.uk

Fibro and Cfs/ME Info Southport.

Fibro and CFS/ME Info Southport is set up as a Voluntary Support drop-in for finding out more about helping yourself when dealing with FM and CFS/ME. Everyone Welcome.

Meetings are held every Thursday from 11.30 am prompt, to 1.15 pm. At the Community Room. First Floor, Southport Fire Station. Albert Road. Southport. PR9 0LH.

There is a lift and parking at council charge around the building.

Telephone: 01704 381983

Email: fibrofreddie@outlook.com

Free2flow Lifestyle Coaching, Birmingham

First Saturday of each month

Free2flow Lifestyle Coaching, 2nd Floor, St Helen's House, 23-31 Vittoria Street, Hockley Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham B1 3ND

11am - 1pm (There is parking available and there is a lift up to the second floor)

Email: aloekatie2016@gmail.com

Salisbury Fibromyalgia Café

We have recently set up a Fibromyalgia Café at our practice in Salisbury, Wiltshire which is launching on April 27th. This is going to run on the 4th Thursday of every month from 1pm - 2:30pm and will not just be open to our patients.

The main aim of the group is to provide peer support to attendees so it is going to be very informal, just somewhere people can go to chat and make friends - we call it a café as everyone is provided with free tea, coffee, hot chocolate and biscuits and it takes place in the onsite café at the practice. The man that is going to facilitate the group is living with fibromyalgia himself and is really excited to set up a group and also arrange other meetings and activities with the members throughout the month (if they like).

Salisbury Medical Practice, Fisherton House, Fountain Way, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 7FD

Tel 01722 333 034

email: katy.gillingham@nhs.net

Fibro Active Long Eaton and Ilkeston

Fibro Active is a support group for people with FM and CFS and their carers. It is a positive and inclusive group that focuses on healthy lifestyle, light exercise, support and sharing information as well as educating members about their condition and help them move forward with their acceptance and management of their illness.

We meet every Tuesday. Time: 11am to 1pm at both venues.

Email: julesbarker71@yahoo.co.uk

Long Eaton branch: Erewash CVS, Granville Ave, Long Eaton, Derbyshire. NG10 4HD (the first Tuesday in the month LE are as programmed) and

Ilkeston Branch: Weleda UK Ltd, Heanor Road, Ilkeston. DE7 8DR

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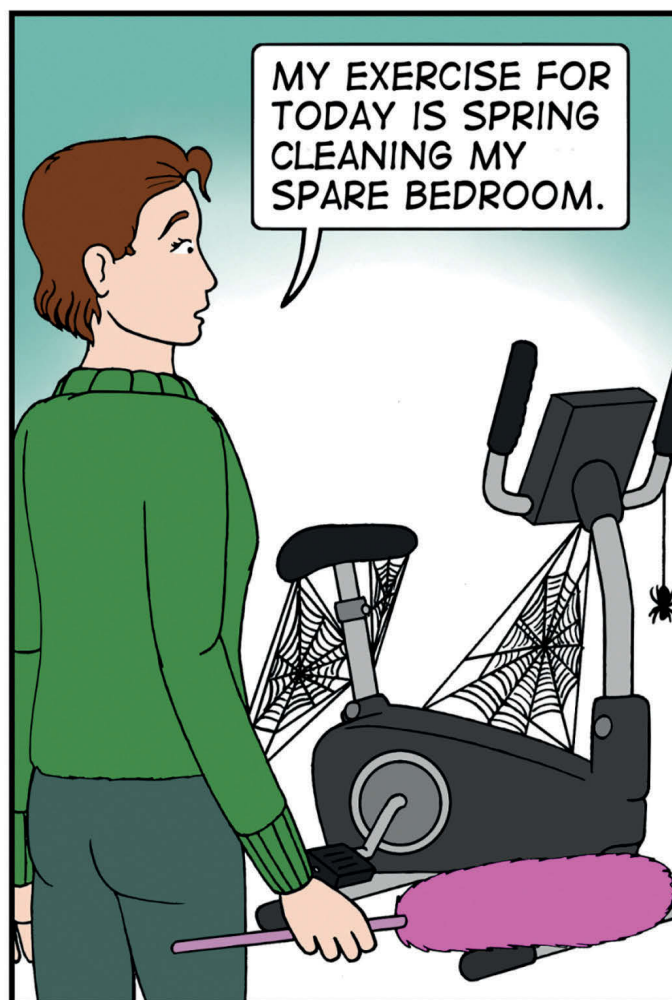
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* Taylor, A., Anderson, J., Riedel, S., Lewis, J.E., Kinser, P.A., Bourguignon, C. Cranial electrical stimulation improves symptoms and functional status in individuals with fibromyalgia, Pain Management Nursing, 2013, 14(4): 327-335. Taylor, Ann Gill, Anderson, Joel G., Riedel, Shannon L., Lewis, Janet E. and Bourguignon, Cheryl. A randomized, controlled, double-blind pilot study of the effects of cranial electrical stimulation on activity in brain pain processing regions in individuals with fibromyalgia, Explore, 9(1):32-40, 2013.

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ASK BRIAN

Brian Barr is a solicitor at Brian Barr Solicitors who specialises in representing fibromyalgia sufferers with accident and insurance claims.

Dear Brian

I have heard that there are all sorts of initiatives going on concerning the legal profession at the moment and that these could have a major effect on fibromyalgia sufferers. Could you please explain these initiatives briefly and set out the implications?

Theresa

Dear Theresa

You are right. There is a lot going on.

Firstly, the small claims limit will be going up to £5,000. That means that solicitors will not be paid for taking cases worth less than £5,000. Specifically, whiplash claims are being targeted. Many fibromyalgia claims start off as whiplash injuries and then the pain becomes more widespread over time. If people are settling those claims without solicitors at an early stage they may well be too late to do anything about it when the fibromyalgia emerges. Traditionally, it has not been possible to settle a claim and then reopen it because the situation has become more serious and there is no great likelihood of the government listening this time.

In a separate development, Lord Justice Jackson is reviewing the way in which solicitors, barristers and experts are going to be paid for cases. He suggested last year that there should be a fixed costs regime for all cases up to £250,000. The fixed costs would not be as much as the costs presently paid and over time their value is likely to shrink in real terms still further. This too is a worrying development.

The Department of Health is currently 'consulting' (to use the present euphemism for 'proposing to introduce') on the imposition of fixed costs on all clinical negligence claims up to £25,000. It was going to be considerably higher, but for some reason this particular consultation is looking at fixed costs up to £25,000 only. That too will catch a lot of claims and fixed costs are unlikely to be generous.

Finally, a development that has helped claimants, although it may well be watered down or even overturned. The discount rate on damages has been reduced from 2.5% to -0.75%. Larger claims may well involve a person losing earnings for, say, 30 years or needing care for, say, years. In the past, a man aged 36 with net earnings of £30,000 a year who cannot work again would have received £600,000 for his future loss of earnings. Now it will be £900,000. A woman aged 36 who would need lifetime care of £30,000 per annum would have received under £900,000 for future care, but would now receive double that. You can see why the insurance industry is up in arms!

Brian

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THE FIBROMYALGIA EXERCISE COLUMN



Exercises that can Empower

by David Jenkin

Exercise as a mindset is often associated with effort, nuisance value, discomfort and negative thought.

However, exercising in certain ways can actually empower you to improve your life immeasurably in ways that would otherwise have been left untapped. This month's column focuses on various exercises and how they can empower you to do other things

Walking Comfort - Walking is great exercise and really enjoyable if it is not painful or uncomfortable to do so. If you find you get tired walking distances you may need to strengthen some of the muscles involved. Sit on a chair with one foot planted on the floor in front of you. Raise the toes off the floor and back down, do this up to 20 times on each side. Next, from the same start position, elevate the heel and rise onto tiptoes. Do this 20 times each side as well. Next, still sitting in the chair, with both feet planted on the floor, extend one leg out straight in front of you, lower back down and repeat. Aim for 10-20 on each side. If walking is painful then mobilise your joints by doing ankle circles, hip circles and gentle knee rocking to loosen up the joints and prevent stiffness and pain

Swimming - Many people used to enjoy swimming but find it too uncomfortable. Roll the shoulders into forward circles, aim for 10-20 on each side, and then do the same with backward circles. Next stand up and reach down towards the toes as low as you can with straight arms and legs. Stand back up straight and repeat. Only do this 5-10 times. It will stretch out all the big muscles in your back. You will also benefit from doing hip, knee and ankle mobilisation exercises

Sports/Pastimes - You may wish to return to a sport/hobby or even take up a new one. Examine what would be required of you physically (reaching, bending, kneeling, twisting etc) and replicate those movements through free movement exercise in your own home. For example if you enjoy golf, gently mobilise the back by twisting from side to side, or if you would like to take up badminton reaching exercises with the arms would be a good start

Whatever it is you want to do, the simplest of exercises can help make them possible and empower you to more of what you like.

Martin Westby and I have co-authored a Self-Help Exercise Guide that includes a whole section on how to do establish this consistency effectively. To order a copy please follow the following web link:

<http://tinyurl.com/o9s6bw8>

Or alternatively you can email the magazine at office@UKFibromyalgia.com

or myself on davidjenkin@hotmail.com

and we can assist you in purchasing your copy. To contact me or enquire about 1:1 training prices www.davidjenkinfitness.co.uk



UK Fibromyalgia "How to Guide – Accessing support on-line"

by Karen Lovegrove

In today's age, it is easy to get left behind not knowing how to access support when it is most needed. Fibromyalgia can be a very lonely condition, but there are people on-line who are suffering just as you are, and will chat with you when you most need it.

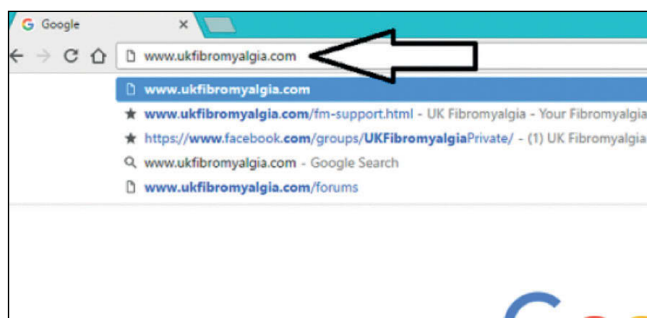
At UK Fibromyalgia, we have three on line sources, where you can access a wealth of information, and speak to fellow sufferers.

These are the website, Facebook and the Forum. This tutorial will take you through the steps to enable you to access each one of them.

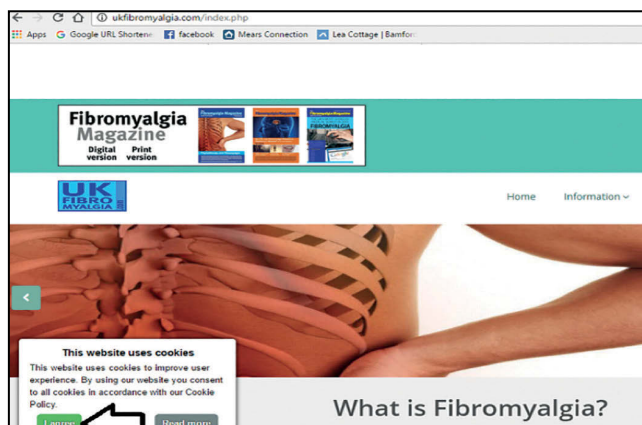
UK Fibromyalgia website

Open a web browser, this could be Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari or Internet Explorer. (There are others but these are the main ones)

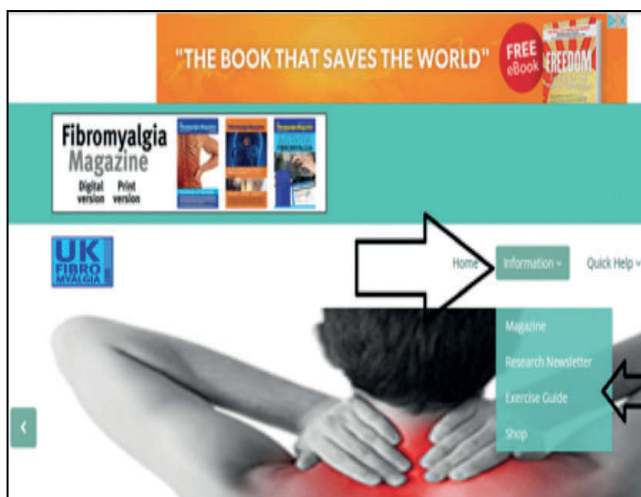
Type in the top browser bar the following web address: www.ukfibromyalgia.com Then hit enter...



The following webpage will open up for you, this is the UKFibromyalgia website, you will notice a box near the bottom of the page, this is accepting that the website uses cookies. Cookies are small files that can help you on the internet by remembering your preferences and some key information like passwords and geographical areas. In the case of surfing the UKFM website there is nothing in the cookies that can harm your computer or phone. If you want to find out more information click Read More, but you will need to click the "I agree" box to continue.



From the menu along the top of the website, you are then able to access all areas. If you hover your mouse without clicking over "Information" for example the following can be seen...

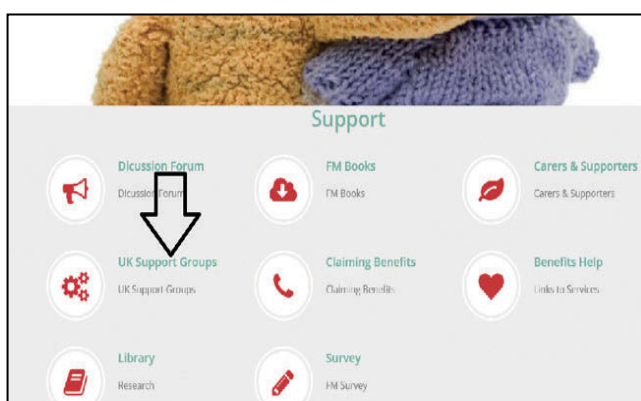


If you hover over the other menus you can click on the links to take you to that topic...

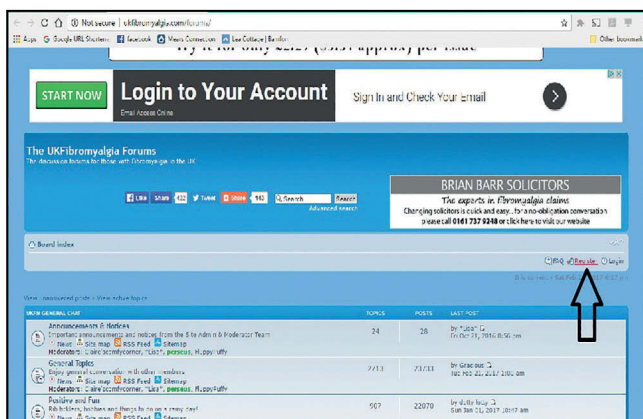
If for example you wanted to access local support groups, running in your area, you hover over the Quick Help menu button, then click Support Groups...



Then click UK Support Groups...



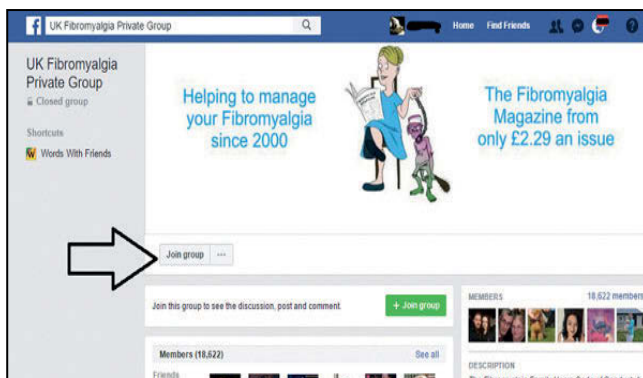
From this menu, you can access the UK Fibromyalgia Forum, click Discussion Forum... You can view the topics but to join in or post questions you will need to register. Your details will not be passed on to any third party, this is purely a registration form to enable you to add comments etc to the forum. You will need an active email address to sign up.



You will need a Facebook account so that you can access the UK Fibromyalgia Private group, this can be opened by anyone providing you have a valid active email address, so go to www.facebook.com and complete the simple registration form...



To access the Facebook Support Group, hover your mouse over the Quick Help menu button on the website then click Facebook Group. UKFibromyalgia now has over 18,500 members, it is a very interactive support group, and is fully moderated by a team continuously during the hours of 7am until midnight every day. On the Forum above and the Facebook Group you would be warmly welcomed.



Next month we will be looking at how to access the UK Fibromyalgia Magazine and Shop.



Forum News

By Claire Collopy

The UK Fibromyalgia forums are a fantastic community where people go to ask questions about the symptoms of fibromyalgia, other members are quite happy to answer those questions. Members also share tips on living with fibromyalgia. It's a warm welcoming community.

This month we have been discussing terrible itching.



Firstly, R shared: 'am having a bad flare up at the moment. I can't stop itching, my skin is burning, i thought it was because I was hot, dehydrated, not moisturised enough, or we had changes washing powder but no all checked off and all ok. I can only lay on my back as the pressure on other parts of my body is incredibly painful...is itching and burning a symptom of fibro, if so what can I do....please help I can't sleep....'

M responded: 'I get this too, it's so bad sometimes that I will scratch until I bleed and blister. I currently have scabs on the backs of my hands and my forehead from where I was really bad last week. For me, it's always a precursor to a bad flare. The only thing I have found that helps is cold water on the affected area.'

I said: 'I too itch all over. I have a scratcher upstairs and downstairs. I even have a small one for my handbag!'

N posted: 'I've been having this and wondering if it was fibromyalgia related. Try an antihistamine, cold press or anti-itching ointment and fingers crossed that would at least help a little.'

D then replied: 'I also have this. I find antihistamines help.'

P also shared: 'Something that's probably reduced my itching lately is having cooler baths.'

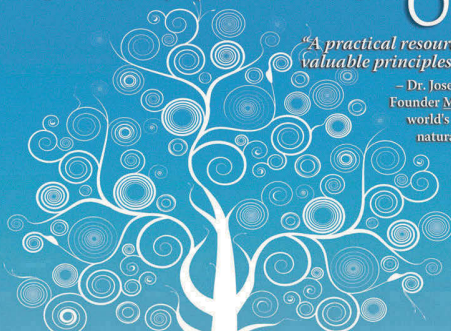
Can you help answer other members' questions about Fibromyalgia? Do you have any questions of your own? Come and join the discussions on the UK Fibromyalgia forums:

<http://ukfibromyalgia.com/forums/index.php>

Best wishes
Claire

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BRIAN BARR
SOLICITORS

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triggered or made worse by
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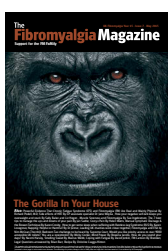
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Jennifer Carter	Hailsham, East Sussex- 01323 848590 - 7 days a week
Ms Gill Galyer	Newark, Notts - Ring between 11am and 4 pm Monday to Friday 01636 526160
Bede Francis Thomas	West London - 020 8840 7759 -Not mornings
Mrs Viv Norrie	Angus & Mearns Fibromyalgia Support Network (Montrose, Scotland) Monday & Friday 5pm to 7pm 0844 887 2389 or e-mail: am-fm@hotmail.co.uk
Margaret Evans	Cardiff - 02920 258526 - 12noon-6pm weekdays
Ann Adams	Ring Anytime 01304 382335
Yvonne Singleton	Fibromyalgia support group - South Wales - 01639 681468
Pamela Buckle	Warwickshire - 01789 765587 - Tues/Wed/Thurs 17.00-22.00
Janice Dipper	Winchester Fibromyalgia Support - 0844 887 2608 winfibrosupport@gmail.com
Mrs Ulla Deichmann	Redruth, Cornwall - 01209 213123 - 10am-10pm ulla.deichmann@btinternet.com
Bexhill & Hastings	Bexhill On-Sea, East Sussex - 0844 887 2425 Tues 10am-12pm
Mandy Wordsworth	TEL: 0113 2795936 - Leeds. Contact anytime.
Janette Leeds	Fibromyalgia Support Group - 0844 887 2371 - 11am-5pm
Alan Smith	Rhondda Valleys - 01443 433027 - Please call 6pm to 10pm
John Allen	Swindon & area Wiltshire Fibromyalgia information & support 01793 751920 (answer-phone phone buddy etc support) highfly29@hotmail.com (emails preferred) 21 Heberden House, Cricklade, Wilts SN6 6AS
Maddie Seacombe	Bristol - Tel 07790130403 - best time is 3pm - 8.30pm.
Claire Hilton 4	3 Alexandra Road, Thornton Cleveleys (nr Blackpool) Lancs FY5 5DB Tel 07912 792250 Any day 11am-6pm shelbyeatenton@hotmail.com
Linda Holder	Luton, Bedfordshire - 01582 570240. Phone chats or meetings phone in the afternoon.
Mrs Teresa White	Bracklesham/Witterings/Selsey Support Groups West Sussex telephone support/group meetings/social lunches 01243 670 783 any pm or evenings
Denise Shotter	Guildford and Bordon monthly meetings 08448872358 5-7pm email denise.guildfordfibro@yahoo.co.uk
Diane Jaques	Burnley, Lancashire - 01282 701390 after 7.30pm Mon-Fri if you would like to chat
Diane Leak	Darlington Friendship Group - 1st Wednesday of the month 12pm-2pm. Upstairs Café of the Darlington Dolphin Centre.
Mrs Jane Wallace	Bursledon Hampshire Contact number: 08448872409 Email: bursledonfibrofriends@gmail.com
Mrs Natalie Hicks	Chorley Fibromyalgia Support, Lancashire - Contact number: 01257 275145 Please leave a message if no answer. Email: nataliehix@gmail.com
West Kent	Fibromyalgia in Tonbridge Support Group meet in TN10 bi-monthly. Tel: 0844 887 2429. Email: fibromyalgia.tonbridge@hotmail.com
E.L.F.S	Edinburgh & Lothian 0844 887 2380
Deb Cooke	Swindon and Salisbury Foggy's 0844 887 2377
Gary Yates	FM/ME/CFS Support & Carers Group based in Milford Haven Mob: 07867 482 929 Tel: 01646 694 521 E-mail: fibrowestwales@hotmail.com
Paul Peccioli	Happy to take calls from anywhere .I assist in PIP & Blue Badge Form Filling dealing with local District Councils and DWP problems. A listening ear and support and am able to aid those with a variety of other problematic areas. I take calls from 08:00hrs till 21:00hrs 7 days a week. 0844 887 2591
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Do you have an underactive thyroid?

Five ways fibromyalgia has changed my life for the better

By Donna of the 'February Stars' blog

It's very easy to focus on all the negatives that come along with having a chronic illness. I'll be honest and say that I've been struggling with the limitations fibro has placed on me recently. The main catalyst for this is that my return to work last month did not go as planned; I did not foresee being unable to manage. It's made me think too much about all the things I have had to give up due to this illness. So I wanted to take a few moments to instead focus on the positives and talk about the ways that my life has changed for the better:

1. I have met some truly wonderful people

Being the only person I know with this condition made me reach out and connect with people online. I have met many inspiring, amazing people. Not only are they super supportive, but seeing all the things they manage to accomplish also fills me with hope. There's something great about talking with other people who completely "get it" and can empathise with your situation.

2. Fibromyalgia made me slow down

This was initially met with resistance and, truthfully, it only happened because my body gave me no option but to. However, I am now able to see this as a positive. People in the modern world are so unbelievably busy. We work, work, work and often lose sight of what is important in our lives. We forget to appreciate everything we already have and focus too much on the future and what we want to achieve. Fibro has made me live more in the moment and appreciate each day for what it is. I appreciate the little things I am able to do and celebrate small successes each day. Who knew being able to wash your hair would be such a victory!

3. It brought me closer to my family

I know that I am incredibly lucky to have an amazing and supportive family. They are honestly my own personal cheerleaders who encourage me and give me strength when I need it. It's absolutely true that when you are caring for someone who is ill, it brings you closer together. That is exactly what has happened with me and my family. My Mum is a superstar who is always there for me and helps me out in every way she can. My Dad is 110% there for me too and I wouldn't be without

him. My husband has had to take on so much and care for me in ways neither of us would have ever anticipated. I honestly don't know what I would do without him.

4. Fibro made me find new passions

Had it not been for this illness I wouldn't have this blog. I enjoy writing it so much and it gives me a great focus. I also may have not thrown myself into photography. I probably would have never found the time for sewing and I doubt I would have made the time to learn Spanish. All of these are things I really enjoy and I try to do them as often as possible.



5. I learned that I enjoy Indian food

This one amuses me as I never liked Indian food! I couldn't even stand the smell of it. It was always a shame as my husband's family loved it and I would regularly miss meals out with them. Since cutting out dairy, wheat and a few other things from my diet, I have been open to experimenting with food more. Turns out my husband is an amazing cook and I actually love homemade Indian cuisine. To top that off, I'm now eating healthier and my diet includes a better variety of food than ever before. Many people feel that restricting what types of food you eat is limiting but for me it's kind of been the opposite.

<https://februarystars.co.uk>

Christine's Recipe

With changing dietary fashions, the current emphasis on low-fat foods means dietary fibre has taken a back seat. However, fibre remains an essential nutrient and a vital part of healthy eating, boosting weight loss and allowing you to feel satisfied for longer after its consumption. Moreover, it reduces the effects of Irritable Bowel Syndrome and lowers the risk of colon cancer and heart disease. Where oats are concerned, product labels are now permitted to claim that oatmeal and oat cereals may reduce the risk of heart disease when eaten as part of a diet low in fat and cholesterol.

So what exactly is fibre? It is the indigestible part of plants, the cellulose fibres forming the leaf webbing in green vegetables, the skins of sweetcorn and beans, and the husks of wheat and corn. It is found in fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, peas, lentils, wholemeal breads and cereals (wheat, oats, rye, barley, quinoa, spelt, buckwheat, corn etc.).

All the recipes below are high in fibre. Note the 'cup' used should be an average sized mug.

High-fibre muffins (makes 12)

- 1 cup rolled oats
- ½ cup bran
- 4 egg whites
- 1 cup skimmed milk, soya milk or rice milk
- ½ cup plain low-fat yoghurt
- ¼ cup fruit juice (any)
- 2 apples, grated
- 1 lemon, rind and juice
- ½ cup currants
- ½ cup prunes, chopped
- 3 tsp baking powder
- ½ cup wholemeal flour
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- ½ tsp allspice

Preheat the oven to 350F and rub olive oil onto two cooking trays. Lightly beat the egg whites, add milk, yoghurt and the fruit juice. Pour the lemon juice over the grated apple to prevent browning. Add the lemon rind and all the fruit to the wet mix and combine well. Mix together the flour, rolled oats, bran, baking powder and spices. Add the dry mix to the wet mix until just combined. Spoon onto the trays and bake for 25 mins.



Homemade granola (serves 4)

- ½ cup honey
- 4 cups rolled oats
- ½ cup almonds, chopped
- ¾ cup wheatgerm
- 1 cup raisins

In a small saucepan, warm the honey over a medium heat for about 1 minute or until very runny. Place the rolled oats in bowl, pour the warm honey over and stir to coat. Spread the mixture evenly on 2 baking sheets and sprinkle the almonds over the top. Bake in 300F, 150C oven for 12 minutes. Stir in the wheat germ and bake, stirring occasionally, for 8-10 minutes longer or until light brown. Remove from the oven, transfer to large bowl and mix in raisins. Let cook completely. The granola can be stored in plastic bag or airtight container for up to 2 weeks at room temperature.

Skillet sweet potatoes (serves 3)

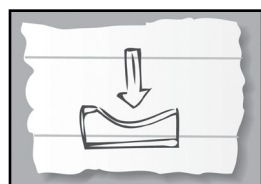
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 1 cup onions, sliced
- 2 sweet potatoes
- ½ cup vegetable stock
- pinch of salt and pepper

In a non-stick skillet, heat the oil over a medium heat. Cook the onions, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until softened. Meanwhile, peel the potatoes, cut into ½ by ½ inch strips and add to skillet along with stock. Cover tightly and simmer, stirring every 5 minutes, for about 15 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Stir in salt and pepper, then serve.

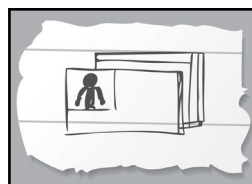
Christine Craggs-Hinton is the author of 'Living with Fibromyalgia', 'The Fibromyalgia Healing Diet' and 'The Chronic Fatigue Healing Diet', from Sheldon Press. They are available from the www.FibromyalgiaShop.co.uk website and from all good book shops.



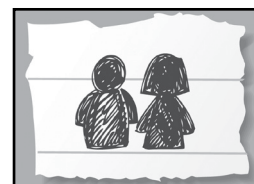
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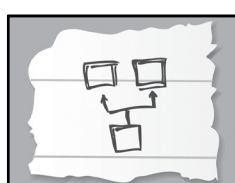
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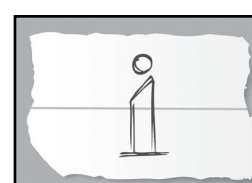
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