



## Fighting Fibromyalgia!

### **Mission:**

We at West U Wellness are committed to serving people who want a natural, higher quality of life for themselves and their families. We acknowledge that physical, chemical, and particularly emotional stress has devastating effects on the nervous system. Chiropractic adjustments remove this nervous system interference. Therefore, we go to extraordinary measures in educating society about the benefits of chiropractic care for optimal health.

### **What is it?**

Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS) is a disorder characterized by achy pain and stiffness in muscles, tendons, and ligaments of the body. Its cause is unknown but it can be triggered by physical or mental stress, in adequate sleep, injury, exposure to dampness or cold, certain infections, and occasionally rheumatoid arthritis or a related disorder.

### **Who gets it?**

Fibromyalgia is a common disorder affecting 2 to 6% of the general population. Women are four times more likely to develop FMS than men. The incidence of FMS increases with age and is most common in women 50 years of age or older.

### **What are the signs and symptoms?**

Individuals with FMS can experience a variety of symptoms including:

- Fatigue
- Stiffness
- Disturbed sleep
- Poor memory or concentration
- Achy pain in muscles
- Numbness
- A feeling of weakness
- Intolerance to cold
- Dry eyes
- Sensitivity to certain foods and allergens

A number of other conditions may be present in people with FMS, including:

- Depression
- Tension and migraine headaches
- Irritable bowel and bladder
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)
- Temporomandibular joint (TMJ) Dysfunction

Because of the heightened experience of pain, it is common to become less active as a way of avoiding pain. Decreased activity then leads to muscle deconditioning and prolonged recovery.

Although the person may appear outwardly well, the effects of FMS are very real. Fibromyalgia can seriously affect daily activities including work, leisure and home life. It is often difficult for sufferers to gain and understanding and support from their family, friends and employers. Being in pain, feeling fatigued and being depressed makes it difficult to remain active, especially when many of these activities worsen the pain.

### **How is it Diagnosed?**

Fibromyalgia is diagnosed based on the pattern and location of the pain and does not require specialized equipment or lab tests.

To be diagnosed with FMS, a patient must have both:

Widespread pain (pain above and below the waist, and on both sides for a period of 3 or more months with at least 11 of the 18 active tender points. Tender points have been identified in specific parts of the body and are considered active when pressure to that area causes an increase in pain.



Individuals who have many of the signs and symptoms of FMS, but do not fit the diagnostic criteria, may also benefit from similar treatment.

#### **How is it treated?**

Many different treatments are available for FMS, with most falling into the categories of physical management and lifestyle management.

#### **Physical Management**

Physical Management includes conditioning exercises, stretching, and proper posture. The key points are listed below:

- Maximum* benefit is obtained when that activity produces shortness of breath and perspiration for 30 minutes, three times a week –build up to this level gradually.
- Common* conditioning activities are walking. Low impact aerobic programs tailored for arthritis, water exercise programs, cycling and stair climbing.
- Warm-up* and stretch before beginning exercise program.

Listen to the body to determine the correct level of exercise—if there is pain for an extended period, then reduce the exercise.

**A large percentage of experts suggest that physical management is dependent upon, or can benefit from, improving mechanical and neurological problems of the neck and low back through Chiropractic Adjustments.**

**Acupuncture also helps people with FMS by balancing the body's natural energy flow and by stimulating the production of the body's natural pain relievers.**

**Gentle massage, ultrasound and certain forms of low force joint mobilization may be helpful.**

Heat from a heating pad, shower or bath may provide some temporary relief.

#### **Lifestyle Management**

With FMS, often patients cannot maintain their usual level of activity and their life may get “out of balance.” They must listen to and respect what their body tells them. They should keep a diary over a period of several weeks or longer and track pain and fatigue levels in relation to other things which are happening such as mood, level of activity, stress and quality of sleep.

Once aware of the factors, which may be out of balance, there are many things that can be done to improve the situation and by doing so patients will begin to feel more in control of their condition.

The typical fibromyalgia patient may also suffer from neurological symptoms including numbness and tingling in the extremities, memory loss, and balance disorders. B-vitamins can be extremely helpful for this, especially B-12.

*B-12* can be taken orally in supplement form, of course, and it is naturally plentiful in animal protein sources such as tuna, steak, chicken, and yogurt, as well as B-12 fortified cereals. In a Swedish study by Drs. Cheney & Lapp, half of the fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue participants reported improvement in symptoms with high dose of 1000 – 5000 mcg. of B-12 injected three times a week. A patient taking such high doses would need to be under medical supervision.

*B-6 and folic acid* will also help neurological symptoms and can help reduce homocysteine – one of the new markers scientists are finding that predicts heart disease.

*Vitamin D* deficiency, which can lead to weak bones, can also be misdiagnosed as fibromyalgia. One of the easiest ways to increase Vitamin D is to have your skin exposed to sunlight for more than 15 minutes per day. Oftentimes we use



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sunscreen or our car's tinted windows block the sun's rays from our skin.

*Magnesium* is a natural muscle relaxant. The best form to take is magnesium citrate. The recommended dosage is 5-10 mg/kg of body weight. For someone who weighs 150 lbs., this averages around 400 mg/day. At this level you will want to balance it with the proper dosage of calcium and other essential minerals. Foods high in magnesium include brown rice, fish, bananas, tofu, blackstrap molasses, seafood and avocados. Magnesium should not be taken in people with kidney problems.

Last, but not least, a diet high in *Omega-3* essential fats compared to *Omega-6* oils is helpful for improving vision, cognitive functions, and joint mobility.

Additional dietary changes can benefit FMS patients:

- Increase water intake
- Increase fruits and vegetables
- Reduce animal protein and fats
- Avoid coffee, sugars and refined and processed foods

### What is the outcome?

The outcome of FMS is variable. Many people are able to remain at work and to lead satisfying, fulfilling lives. Some, however, become quite debilitated and have trouble sustaining their usual levels of work and recreational activity. One of the main factors, which have been shown to affect outcome, is how quickly treatment begins following the onset of the symptoms.

*For more information on FMS and how to help control it please contact Dr. Caroline Long and Dr. Sherman Yeager at West U Wellness.*

## Want to Get in Shape for Summer?

**Lose unwanted pounds? Reduce High Cholesterol and Blood Pressure?  
 Need help Controlling Diabetes?**

**Join Our 5 Week Doctor and Personal Trainer Supported "Get Fit Program"  
 Sign-up today!!!**

West U Wellness hosts or participates in numerous events and activities each month. Included in these events are free health talks covering a different topic every **Tuesday at 6:00 PM** in West U Wellness. We believe these talks to be a means of allowing our patients to improve their lifestyles.

**\*Tired of that nagging low back pain?  
 Tired of taking medication and still having pain?  
 Come hear Natural Alternatives to reduce Low Back Pain on Tuesday,  
 May 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 PM here at West University Wellness!**

### June Calendar of Events

			1 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	2	3	4
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5	6	7 Cholesterol Health Talk	8 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	9	10	11 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
12	13	14 Acupuncture Health Talk	15 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	16	17	18
19 Father's Day	20	21 Head, Neck & Shoulder Pain Health Talk	22 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	23	24	25 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
26	27	28 Disc Problems Health Talk	29 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	30		

## *July Calendar of Events*

					1	2
3	4 Independence Day (CLOSED)	5 Childhood Illness Health Talk	6 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	7	8	9 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
10	11	12 Shoulder & Knee Pain Health Talk	13 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	14	15	16
17	18	19 Low Back Pain Health Talk	20 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	21	22	23 <b>West U Wellness Open</b>
24 <hr/> 31	25	26 ADD/ADHD Health Talk	27 West U Walking Club 7:30 am	28	29	30

*Dr. Sherman Yeager & Dr. Caroline Long are available to give free "stress management" lectures to a variety of groups. If you would like us to speak at your company or have us offer free spinal screenings at your place of work, your school or your church, please contact our office at (713) 490-2225.*

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