



Answers That Matter.

Understanding Fibromyalgia FACT SHEET

OVERVIEW: Fibromyalgia is a disorder of chronic widespread pain and tenderness.¹ People living with fibromyalgia experience increased sensitivity to pain.²

CAUSE: The cause of fibromyalgia remains unknown. Some experts believe it is due to some combination of changes in brain and spinal cord chemistry,³ genetics⁴ and stress.⁵

DIAGNOSIS: Only a healthcare provider can diagnose fibromyalgia. The disorder cannot be detected with blood tests or X-rays. In 1990, the American College of Rheumatology developed criteria for classification of fibromyalgia. These criteria are a history of chronic widespread pain for at least three months, and pain in at least 11 of 18 tender points on examination.¹

INCIDENCE: Fibromyalgia is estimated to affect 2 percent of the U.S. population – approximately 5 million people.⁶ Women are more likely to be diagnosed with fibromyalgia, but men also develop the disorder.⁷

SYMPTOMS: The disorder is characterized by chronic widespread pain and tenderness. Some patients may have additional symptoms.³

TREATMENT: While there is no cure for fibromyalgia, the disorder can be managed with a combination of education, medication and lifestyle changes.³ Because everyone who lives with fibromyalgia has a different experience, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to managing the disorder. People living with fibromyalgia should work with their doctor to identify an individualized care plan that works best for them.

¹ Wolfe, F, et al. "The American College of Rheumatology 1990 Criteria for the Classification of Fibromyalgia." *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. 1990; 33:160, 165.

² Gracely, RH, et al. "Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Evidence of Augmented Pain Processing in Fibromyalgia." *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. 2002; 46(5): 1333 – 1334.

³ Leventhal, LJ. "Management of fibromyalgia." *Annals of Internal Medicine*. 1999; 131: 850.

⁴ Arnold, L, et al. "Family Study of Fibromyalgia." *Arthritis & Rheumatism*. 2004; 50(3): 944.

⁵ Bennett, Robert M., et al. "An internet survey of 2,596 people with fibromyalgia." *BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders*. March 9, 2007. 8(27):6.

⁶ Lawrence, et al. "Estimates of the Prevalence of Arthritis and Other Rheumatic Conditions in the United States." *Arthritis and Rheumatism*. 2008; 58(1):31.

⁷ Wolfe, F, et al. "The prevalence and characteristics of fibromyalgia in the general population." *Arthritis Rheum*. 1995; 38(1):19.