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*Fibromyalgia*

***Information for   
patients and carers***



**Grampian Pain Service**

**What is Fibromyalgia?**

Fibromyalgia is a condition that causes widespread pain. It is not life threatening or progressive but it can have a big impact on your quality of life.

It is thought that 1 in 25 people may be affected by Fibromyalgia.

Women are affected more than men and symptoms can vary from day to day.

**What are the symptoms of Fibromyalgia?**

* **Pain** that affects many areas in the body – widespread pain. Often made worse with activity
* **Tiredness** or fatigue
* Unrefreshed **sleep** – waking up from sleep and feeling like you haven’t slept at all.
* Concentration/**memory** problems
* Irritable bowels
* Headaches
* Low mood
* Tender joints and muscles
* Increased sensitivity (to noise; temperature for example)

This is a list of some of the symptoms you may experience.

**What causes Fibromyalgia**?

The cause of Fibromyagia is not known. It is thought to be due to altered levels of certain chemicals in the brain and changes in the way the central nervous system (brain, spinal cord and nerves) processes pain messages carried around the body.

This does not mean the pain is ‘not real’ or ‘in your head’

There are no changes in the body that can be picked up by an MRI scan or an X-ray.

**What does this mean for me?**

There is no cure for Fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is a long-term (chronic) condition.

Although your symptoms may not disappear you can improve your quality of life build; your activity and manage pain symptoms with support from your GP and healthcare team.

**What treatments are available?**

Although there is no cure for Fibromyalgia at present, there are however many ways that you can improve your symptoms with self management techniques, therapies and the right medication.

For most people Fibromyalgia can be diagnosed and managed by their **GP** without the need to refer them to a Specialist.

***Exercise can also improve your sleep and general wellbeing***

Self-management is very important in dealing with Fibromyalgia and its symptoms.

You may benefit from:

**•** Help to developlong-term management strategies

* + Medications, which some people find helpful to ease pain and/or improve sleep
  + Psychological therapies, which can help with relaxation, stress management and coping strategies
  + Physiotherapy, to help improve your function and keep you mobile
  + Occupational therapy, which can help with techniques for managing daily activities.

**What can I do to help myself?**

Learn about and understand your condition. (See the resources below for more information)

**•** Pace your daily activities. Your Physiotherapist can direct you with this.

*Building up your activity levels can allow you to be more involved in the things that you enjoy, which in turn can help improve your mood and quality of life*

**•** Follow a graded programme of physical activity (for example swimming, walking or cycling), starting gently and gradually building up.

**•** Share your experiences with other people. (See information below on local support groups)

* Find out about techniques to help with managing stress and anxiety.

**Useful Websites and Resources**

* [*www.arthritisresearchuk.org*](http://www.arthritisresearchuk.org)

*This website has lots of information on Fibromyalgia, go to conditions and look under ‘F’ for more information on Fibromyalgia.*

* [*www.nhs.uk/conditions/fibromyal*g*ia*](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fibromyalgia)

**More resources on managing chronic pain conditions can be found in our ‘Signposting’ leaflet**

***Support Groups:***

***Grampian Pain Support***

[*www.grampianpainsupport.btck.co.uk*](http://www.grampianpainsupport.btck.co.uk)

[*affasair*](http://www.affasair.co.uk)

*This is a Facebook group*

[*www.ukfibromyalgia.com*](http://www.ukfibromyalgia.com)

*This website contains information on local support**groups.*

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**This leaflet is also available in large print.**

**Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on (01224) 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1508.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call (01224) 554149 to let us know.

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**There are things you can**