

# Fibromyalgia



## Background

Fibromyalgia (fi-bro-my-AI-juh) syndrome (FMS) is a chronic widespread musculoskeletal pain disorder with patients usually having at least 11 specific tender points on both sides of the body — above and below the waist, in the trunk, arms and legs.

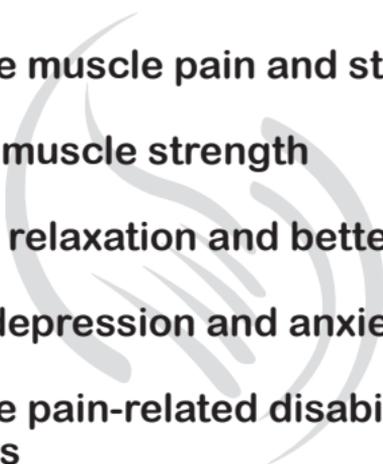
**Symptoms:** muscular stiffness, multiple tenderpoints, poor sleep, irritable bowel syndrome, headaches, numbness and tingling, and a sensation of swelling of the hands and feet. Fibromyalgia is frequently associated with depression, memory and concentration difficulties as well as anxiety. It affects up to 2% of the population of all ages and is 7 times more common in women than men.

**Cause:** unknown

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## Treatment

### REGISTERED MASSAGE THERAPISTS MAY HELP:

- decrease muscle pain and stiffness
  - improve muscle strength
  - promote relaxation and better sleep
  - reduce depression and anxiety
  - decrease pain-related disability through exercises
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## Research

### Fibromyalgia pain decreases while sleep improves after massage therapy

Massage therapy has been observed to be helpful in some patients with fibromyalgia. This study was designed to examine the effects of massage therapy versus relaxation therapy on sleep, substance P, and pain in fibromyalgia patients. Across the course of the study, only the massage therapy group reported an increase in the number of sleep hours and a decrease in their sleep movements. In addition, substance P levels decreased, and the patients' physicians assigned lower disease and pain ratings and rated fewer tender points in the massage therapy group. (Field T., et al, *Journal of Clinical Rheumatology*. 8(2):72-76, April 2002.)

### Physical therapy in the treatment of fibromyalgia

Massage may reduce muscle tension and may be prescribed as an adjunct with other therapeutic interventions. Accordingly a multidisciplinary approach combining these therapies in a well-balanced program may be the most promising strategy and is currently recommended in the treatment of fibromyalgia. (Offenbacher M., Stucki G., *Scand J Rheumatol Suppl*. 2000;113:78-85.)

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