

General Fibro tips:

1. Make a checklist of your symptoms and deal with the most pressing ones. A useful place to start from is to look at what is interfering with your sleep and take it from there. Getting into a good sleep pattern is key to recovering from fibro.

- No caffeine after 4pm. No liquids after 7pm
- Bedroom is only for the 3 S's - Sleep, sex & sick
- No naps
- No TV/computer/laptops 1-2 hrs before bedtime.
- Aim to get to bed by 10pm
- Establish a regular go to bed time & wake up time
- Exercise but not too close to bed time
- If you are not asleep within 20 mins get up
- No heavy meals before bedtime
- Is snoring or sleep apnea a problem? Get it checked out.

2. Make lifestyle changes. Take stock of your life and honestly assess the areas you need to change. Ask yourself the following:

- Are my personal relationships nurturing?
- Do I have a good relationship with myself?
(watch out for perfectionism & a harsh inner critic)
- Do I have the tools to manage stress?
- Is my environment (work, home) a healthy place to live?

3. Diet. 30% of people with FMS are hypoglycemic. If you like your sugar and carbs a little too much you could fall into this category, in which case you need to keep your blood sugars constant. Have 6 smaller meals rather than 3 big ones. Food intolerances are very noticeable in people with Fibro. You may need to limit your intake of carbohydrate, wheat, sugar, alcohol, chocolate, dairy, caffeine, tomatoes, potatoes and citric fruits. Food intolerance differ from person to person so you need to find out what your problem foods are. Diets that people have found helpful are Paleo diet, Low GI diet, FODMAPS diet, Gluten free diet and Low oxalate diet. Supplements that can be helpful are CQ10, Fish oil high in EPA, Vit D, B12 injections, Iron. There is no point in taking expensive supplements if your diet is rubbish and it would be important to see a nutritionist/dietician to see what supplements are suitable for you.

4. Am I on the right medication? Dr Woods (American dr with interest in fibro) maintains that at the moment several illnesses are being grouped under the heading of Fibro. This could explain why different medications work for different people. Medications that Dr Woods uses in his practice are Gabapentin, Cymbalta, Savella, Mirapex, Sodium Oxybate, Naltrexone and Pindolol.

5. Build up a good relationship with your GP. Find a specialist who takes Fibro seriously and understands all

the areas that need to be looked at e.g. cervical compression, lymes disease, lupus, sjogren's syndrome, immune dysfunction, thyroid issues etc. There is a test called a reverse T3 test which can highlight thyroid issues that don't come up on the regular thyroid test. You could have blood tests to rule out stress hormone problems (cortisol dhea), vitamin D, iron stats (include ferritin), b6 b12, folate, calcium, magnesium, copper. Blood sugar (glucose for a snapshot & HbA1c for a historical look at your blood sugar control) - A full screen for coeliac disease to include IgA (total and endomysial, Tissue transglutaminase IgA, HLA tissue type). Bear in mind test can come back normal and you can still have non-coeliac gluten sensitivity. Hydrogen breath test for SIBO.

6. Identify patterns. Keep a simple diary noting what makes your symptoms worse. There is always a pattern. By noticing triggers you will then be in a better position to develop strategies to manage your symptoms. It's even worthwhile looking into your family medical history and seeing what illnesses are lurking there. It's important to know if there is a genetic link or if fibro has developed as the result of some kind of trauma or stressful event. e.g. car accident or a bereavement. Make a list of 5 things that keep you well e.g. 1. walking 2. eating healthily 3. meditation 4. meeting friends 5. pacing work. Usually a flare up happens when you haven't been doing the things that keep you well. Note that the weather can also cause flare ups.

7. Resolve mechanical issues keeping you in a cycle of pain. A manual treatment eg. Massage, physio, chiropractor is usually required. This is very important. The mystery is in the history - have you had any neck trauma? Are there underlying issues with your spine? Do you have hypermobility? Is TMJ an issue? It is very important to take good care of your spine and resolve any mechanical issues which maybe keeping you in a cycle of pain.

8. Educate yourself about your illness.

Read Fibromyalgia and muscle pain, your self-treatment guide by Leon Chaitow and The Complete Fibromyalgia Health, Diet Guide & Cookbook: Includes Practical Wellness Solutions & 100 Delicious Recipes by Dr. Louise S. McCrindle & Dr. Alison C. Bested.

9. Don't try to do it all yourself. Recruit a 'partner in wellness.' This can be a friend or family member to help you implement a recovery plan. Brainfog is one of the biggest complaints with this illness and it can make it difficult to get organised.

10. Remember to be gentle and patient with yourself. There's no quick fix with fibro. Management is possible but it takes time.

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