

# Fibromyalgia

**Exercise** may be beneficial to those suffering from fibromyalgia. Exercise is known to increase levels of endorphins which are the body's natural pain killers. When one is suffering from fibromyalgia, however, it is often hard to become motivated to exercise. By working with your Doctor of Chiropractic, an exercise program that begins slowly and is appropriate for your condition and fitness level can be developed. Stretches and warm-up exercises will be included to reduce the risk of injury.

**Methods to improve sleep** may be discussed. Because taking sleeping pills can worsen the ability to sleep over time and because they are associated with negative side effects, they are not recommended. Instead, simple changes such as these may help:

- Postural changes may improve your ability to sleep, so your Doctor of Chiropractic will discuss correct posture with you.
- Other factors that may influence sleep, such as alcohol and caffeine consumption, will be discussed.
- Sleep may also be improved by making the room as quiet as possible, or by providing "white noise" such as a running fan.
- If necessary, keep family and pets from disturbing sleep.
- Nutritional supplements may be beneficial in some cases, but correct dosage and long-term use should be discussed with your chiropractor.

**Stress reduction** may be beneficial as both physical and mental stress can aggravate fibromyalgia symptoms. Your chiropractor

can suggest relaxation techniques that are easy to perform and are appropriate for you.

**Dietary and nutritional factors** that may improve your symptoms will be discussed as necessary. A food diary may be helpful to find patterns in food consumption and symptom improvement or exacerbation.

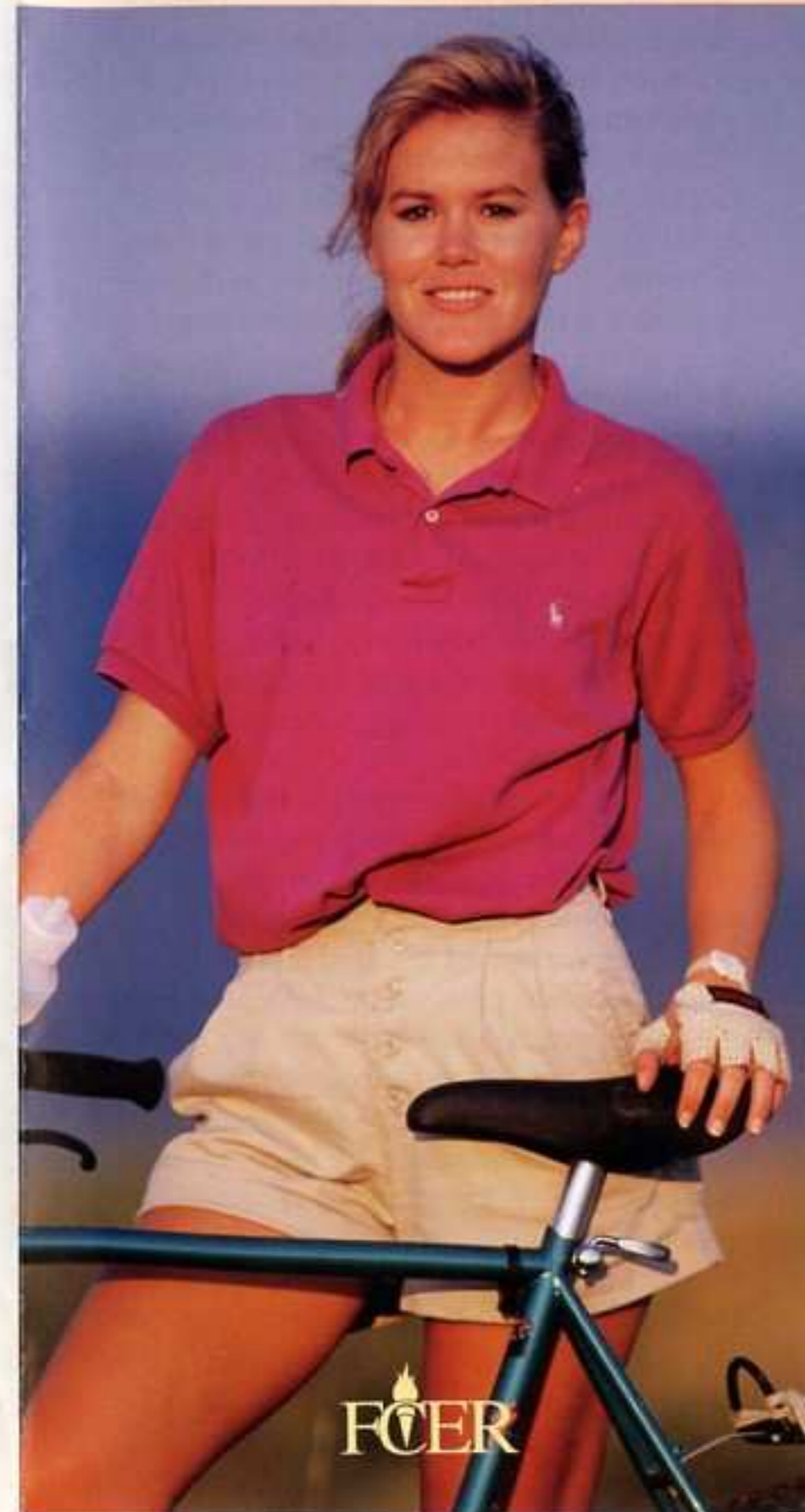
Because fibromyalgia is a complex disease that is thought to be chronic, finding effective methods of symptom management that reduce the use of medication is vital. Many medications, including over the counter pain relievers, have potentially dangerous side effects—and long-term use increases the risk of injury. This has been found even with small doses of aspirin.<sup>2</sup> Following all of your Doctor of Chiropractic's advice, which means keeping appointments and making all recommended lifestyle changes, will improve the likelihood that you will recognize methods of care that improve your symptoms. With a condition like fibromyalgia, the relief you get will largely depend on your commitment to managing symptoms.

References for this pamphlet can be found at [www.fcfer.org/Reference/9559A.htm](http://www.fcfer.org/Reference/9559A.htm)

*Compliments of your Doctor of Chiropractic*

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## *Managing Fibromyalgia With Chiropractic*

**F**or at least 100 years, cases have been reported of patients with unexplained muscle, tendon, and ligament pain. Unfortunately for many of these people, it wasn't until 1992 that an actual diagnosis of "fibromyalgia" was introduced by the World Health Organization, with specific criteria defining the disease. For people with this widespread bodily pain, however, a disease definition does not make diagnosis easy. Because the symptoms of fibromyalgia are so similar to the symptoms of other diseases, patients must often be tested for numerous conditions, making the diagnosis of fibromyalgia one of elimination. Conditions that must be ruled out include arthritis, Lyme disease, heart disease, neurological disorders, vitamin and/or mineral deficiencies, and many others. Fibromyalgia pain has been described as "deep muscular aching, burning, throbbing, shooting and stabbing."<sup>1</sup>

Symptoms of fibromyalgia may include flu-like achiness, pain and muscle stiffness that is worse in the morning, fatigue, restless sleep, chronic headache, irritable bowel syndrome, menstrual cramps, premenstrual syndrome, chest pain, an intolerance to cold and damp weather, jaw pain, anxiety, depression, and others. Because there are so many and such widespread symptoms, no two people with fibromyalgia are likely to suffer in the same way. Fortunately for doctors (and frustrated patients) attempting to diagnose the disease there is one set of symptoms that **every** patient must have in order to meet the defined criteria for fibromyalgia—each patient must have at least 11 of 18 specific tender

points (areas on the body that are painful to the touch—see illustration).

### *First The Bad News*

There is no known cause or cure of fibromyalgia. Some with the illness report that symptoms began after a bacterial or viral infection. Others notice symptoms following an automobile accident or other trauma. But, since these events do not precede all cases of fibromyalgia, there can be no definitive conclusion regarding a link.

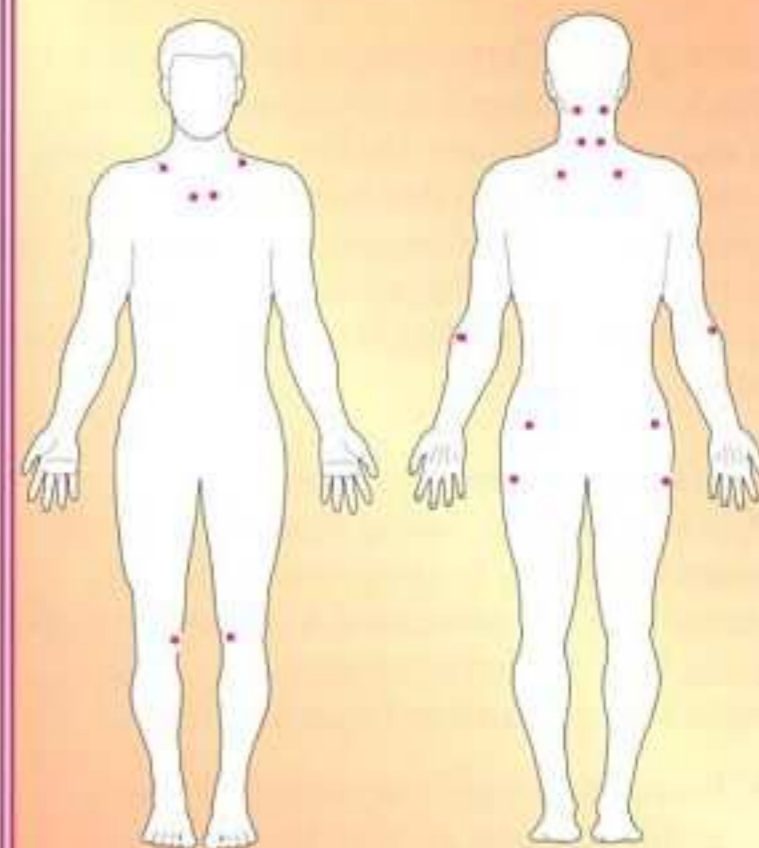
So, if there is no known cure, is there a way to manage the symptoms without prescribed medication and the inherent risk of side effects?

### *Now The Good News*

Research that has been done on fibromyalgia suggests that spinal manipulation, exercise, dietary and nutritional improvements, postural changes, physical treatments (ice, heat, light massage, etc.), and stress management may improve symptoms, at least for some patients. As symptoms vary with each person, methods of treatment that work for each patient may also vary. Fortunately Doctors of Chiropractic provide the treatments that may prove beneficial.

Before chiropractic treatment can begin, a thorough examination will be performed and a complete health history will be taken. The results of any previous tests (including diagnostic imaging) that you have undergone should be provided to the chiropractor to reduce duplication of necessary tests and to reduce costs. If any illnesses or accidents preceded your symptoms, be sure to tell the Doctor of Chiropractic.

## The 18 Tender Points Seen in Fibromyalgia



Pain in at least 11 of these areas during examination is a sign of fibromyalgia.

## *What Management May Include*

There are several chiropractic methods of care that may be helpful in your case—and the results of the examination will determine which treatments will be used. If you ever question your treatment, you are encouraged to ask questions. Your treatment may include:

**Chiropractic Adjustment** (or manipulation) may be helpful in managing symptoms of fibromyalgia because it may reduce muscle tension and stress, correct postural dysfunction, and promote healing.