

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO HOSPITAL
THE CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

FIBROMYALGIA

The chronic, debilitating muscle pain and fatigue caused by fibromyalgia are frustrating to patients and physicians alike. The complex nature of fibromyalgia makes it difficult to diagnose and treat it effectively. The Center for Integrative Medicine provides patients suffering from fibromyalgia a variety of techniques to relieve and control their symptoms.

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FOUR CONSIDERATIONS WHEN TREATING FIBROMYALGIA:

1.

Fibromyalgia is clinically diagnosed when a patient has widespread pain that lasts more than three months along with pain upon pressure on at least 11 out of 18 defined tender points. Other symptoms such as fatigue, headache, memory problems and irritable bowel syndrome may be present in fibromyalgia patients. It may be difficult to diagnose fibromyalgia with confidence because symptoms often mimic those of conditions such as rheumatic illnesses, hepatitis C, cancer or thyroid disease. Fibromyalgia may even coexist with these conditions. At The Center for Integrative Medicine, a fibromyalgia diagnosis is confirmed before treatment is recommended or provided.

2.

Prescription medication often doesn't provide patients the relief they seek. While anti-depressants, anti-seizure and pain medications can be effective to a degree, they don't allow patients to take control of their illness and may lead to dependency. The physicians at The Center for Integrative Medicine will discuss non-medication healing approaches, as well as review medications used in order to optimize the effectiveness of these approaches.

3.

Misleading and false information is readily available to patients in the community and online. Unqualified and misguided practitioners target fibromyalgia patients, as these patients are often desperately seeking new solutions and treatment options to relieve their symptoms. The Center for Integrative Medicine's experienced and compassionate physicians and practitioners educate patients about fibromyalgia and offer them the opportunity to ask any questions regarding what they have read or heard. Patients are then guided through The Center for Integrative Medicine's evidence-based treatment options.

4.

Although there is no definitive cause or cure for fibromyalgia, studies suggest that the most effective treatment plan for the condition combines good sleep, graded exercise and cognitive behavioral therapy. To be successful, this type of self-care treatment requires patients to be actively involved in their care and committed to the program. Practitioners at The Center for Integrative Medicine spend time with each patient to explain the recommended treatment plan in depth and to ensure that the patient has the information needed to be successful. Patients are often encouraged to keep a journal between visits as an incentive to keep up with exercise and to provide positive feedback.

HOW INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE CAN BENEFIT YOUR PATIENTS WITH FIBROMYALGIA:

TYPICAL TREATMENT PLAN

HEALTH AND WELLNESS VISIT

DIAGNOSIS CONFIRMATION

TREATMENT PLAN OF SLEEP, EXERCISE AND BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

CONSIDERATION OF CAM THERAPIES

EXERCISE JOURNAL

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS

LETTER TO PHYSICIANS

CAM THERAPIES* AND SELF-CARE STRATEGIES USED TO TREAT FIBROMYALGIA

SLEEP AND EXERCISE

A pattern of consistent and regular sleep and a daily aerobic exercise routine can help patients manage fibromyalgia. Behavioral techniques, referral to a sleep specialist or medications shown to be useful in managing fibromyalgia may be used to encourage sleep. To promote exercise, a physician will create and discuss an individualized, graded program with your patient.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

In order to change self-defeating behaviors and enhance belief in self-efficacy, patients will meet with one of The Center for Integrative Medicine's experienced psychologists. In addition to cognitive behavioral therapy, the psychologist may lead patients through stress-reduction techniques such as meditation, focused breathing or biofeedback.

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

Patients are educated about medications that may successfully treat their condition. Patients are encouraged to decrease or stop the use of narcotics, as they are not considered to be an effective way to treat fibromyalgia.

COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM) THERAPIES

If patients are able to demonstrate commitment to their sleep, exercise and behavioral therapy treatment plan, a physician or practitioner may recommend CAM therapies, such as massage, acupuncture and chiropractic. In some studies of fibromyalgia, these therapies have been shown to be helpful. They should not replace self-care and medication use.



fig. 1 - Fibromyalgia may be treated with a variety of CAM therapies including acupuncture. If appropriate, acupuncture may be recommended for patients with fibromyalgia.

*Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies are alternative medicine treatments such as acupuncture or chiropractic that are used to complement traditional conventional care provided by physicians.

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

Your patients can schedule appointments at The Center for Integrative Medicine by calling 720.848.1090. Appointments can be made Monday through Friday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, with limited evening availability. If you would like to provide us with information prior to a patient's visit (encouraged), please fax a consult and/or relevant records to 720.848.1277.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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