



# *Fibromyalgia: What Is It?*

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**Pain Is A Tricky Thing...**



**It Helps Us To Avoid Excessive Injuries**



**But It Can Sometimes Prevent  
Us From Living Life Fully**

A photograph of three elderly individuals sitting at a table in what appears to be a community center or library. They are looking at laptops. The man in the middle is wearing a blue sweater and glasses. The woman on the right is wearing a grey jacket and glasses. The woman on the left is wearing a pink top and glasses. The background shows bookshelves and a bright, indoor setting. A blue rectangular graphic element is located in the top right corner of the image.

**Discovering How To Battle  
Fibromyalgia Is A Great First  
Step!**

# What Is Fibromyalgia?



- ▶ Chronic & Complex Disorder
  - ▶ Affects 2% Of Canadians
- ▶ Symptoms Include:
  - ▶ Pain And Tenderness
  - ▶ Fatigue
  - ▶ Trouble Sleeping
  - ▶ Increased Sensitivity
- ▶ Cause Is Unknown

<https://www.fmaware.org/fibromyalgia-symptoms/>

# Theories About The Cause

- ▶ Malfunctioning Nervous System
  - ▶ Heighted pain perception
  - ▶ Ineffective Pain Modulation
  - ▶ Overstimulation of "Fight Or Flight" System
- ▶ Possible Autoimmune Disorder
  - ▶ Causing Increased Pain Sensations
- ▶ Additional Factors:
  - ▶ Diet
  - ▶ Viral Infections
  - ▶ PTSD



# Risk Factors

- ▶ Usually Affects:
  - ▶ Women (80-90%)
  - ▶ Middle Aged Individuals
- ▶ At This Time:
  - ▶ No Known Racial/Ethnic Risk Factors
  - ▶ Can Run In Families (But Not Always)
- ▶ Having Other Medical Conditions Increases Risk...
  - ▶ Mood Disorders
  - ▶ Rheumatic Diseases





# Diagnosis

- ▶ No Exact Test
  - ▶ Currently Being Studied
- ▶ Diagnosis Includes:
  - ▶ Medical History
  - ▶ Physical Exam
  - ▶ Ruling Out Other Conditions
- ▶ Diagnostic Criteria:
  - ▶ Widespread Pain
  - ▶ Generalized Pain In At Least 4 Of 5 Regions, Is Present
  - ▶ Symptoms Present For At Least 3 Months



# Treatment

- ▶ No Current Cure
  - ▶ Can Learn To Manage Symptoms
- ▶ Treatment Includes:
  - ▶ Exercise
  - ▶ Medication
  - ▶ Behavioral/ Psychological Therapy



# Living With Fibromyalgia

- ▶ There Are Various Ways To Help Manage
  - ▶ Exercise
  - ▶ Education
  - ▶ Social Support
  - ▶ Therapy



# Education

- ▶ Getting A Diagnosis Can Be Scary
  - ▶ But It's A Step Towards Healing!
- ▶ Knowing Can Help To Make Decisions
- ▶ Learning How It May Affect Our Life
- ▶ Discovering What Resources Are Available



# Social Support



- ▶ Ensure You Have People To Support You
- ▶ Fibromyalgia Support Groups
  - ▶ Can Help You Discover Ways Others Have Managed
- ▶ Non-fibromyalgia Social Groups
  - ▶ Can Help You Discover Other Parts Of Living

# Therapy

- ▶ There Is A Lot Of Processing With A Medical Diagnosis
- ▶ Learn To Unpack Your Emotions
- ▶ Discover Ways To Move Forward
- ▶ Learn How To Change How You Experience Pain



# Exercise

- ▶ Exercise Is Known For Many Benefits
  - ▶ One Of The Most Helpful Treatment Options!
- ▶ Helps Tackle Various Symptoms
  - ▶ Fatigue
  - ▶ Anxiety/Depression
- ▶ Start Slow At First
  - ▶ Symptoms Can Be Worsen By Overloading, Overstretching, Excessive Heat Or Cold
- ▶ Aquatic Therapy Is The Most Tolerable Form Of Exercise
  - ▶ In Warmer Water





## I Am More Than My Diagnosis By: Dave Shields

"Initially, I was overcome by the severity of the symptoms.... The pain, fatigue, sleep problems, and mental fog were overwhelming. I couldn't work or function. I would sit around in the rocker in agony, consumed by pain."

"I live with Fibromyalgia. I live an empowered and fulfilling life despite that. I've gone from surviving to thriving. You can too!"

<https://www.fmaware.org/i-am-more-than-my-diagnosis/>



A middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a red long-sleeved shirt, is lifting two black dumbbells. He has a focused expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A blue rectangular graphic element is in the top right corner.

**Discover The Strength You  
Didn't Know You Had!**