

# Understanding FIBROMYALGIA

## 1 What is Fibromyalgia (FMS)?

Fibromyalgia is considered a central nervous system disorder. It affects individuals in different areas of the body at different levels of severity. FMS can be contracted at any age by any gender, however 9/10 sufferers are currently women.

## 3 What are the symptoms?

Fibromyalgia sufferers experience widespread **Daily Pain** on a scale of moderate to extreme. Other common symptoms can include:

Memory Loss

Insomnia

Sensitivity to light,  
touch and sound

Cognitive  
Impairment

Anxiety

Fatigue

Depression

Not all sufferers exhibit or experience the same symptoms.

## 2 How is it contracted?

FMS often lies dormant within an individual's system, attacking when the immune system is extremely low. This is often caused by:

Surgery

Infection

Physical Trauma

Extreme Psychological Stress

Suicide and Injury are the leading causes of death for those with Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia patients often experience medical gaslighting and ineffective medicines resulting in fear/distrust of the medical industry

## 4 What doesn't help?

Unfortunately chronic illness patients are often forced to experience:

- ① **Judgement.** Remember: No one asks to get sick and everyone deserves respect.
- ② **Assumptions.** Learn to ask the afflicted directly and/or research before assuming: What FMS is like, the symptoms they experience or why patients make certain choices.
- ③ **Weaponising.** Using assumptions of a patient's illness to gain an emotional advantage or manipulation. Example: Punishing or assuming 'faking of pain' when a sufferer chooses to rest. Believe it or not, people can assume this. Remember: Patients know their energy levels and conserving energy can heal.
- ④ **Shaming.** E.g. Reminding patients it is hard for others. Only patients know how hard FMS is and they can already feel like a burden.

## 5 Flareups and Energy

A FMS flareup can be described as an increase in symptoms. Flareups are extremely painful and terrifying to experience. A flareup:

Can be caused by food triggers, hormonal changes or stress

Can occur when a patient runs out of energy/exerts beyond an invisible point

Can make sufferers avoid/afraid of exercise and physical exertion

For more information on avoiding flareups, see: 'Spoon Theory - FMS'

The highs and lows between feeling good and a sudden flare up can make life overwhelming

30-40% of patients either have to stop working or change jobs

## **6 Avoid discussing someone's illness with others**

Contracting an illness is an emotionally painful and challenging experience unique to each patient. Because it can be easy for others to get crucial details wrong and draw incorrect conclusions about a sufferer's experience, it is disrespectful and inappropriate to casually discuss another's illness, unless:

**It is absolutely necessary**

**The motivation is to help and assist from a place of compassion**

**Many mystery illnesses, including cases of FMS, are currently increasing globally**

## **7 Subconscious Biases**

Do you know someone who is sick? Do you subconsciously pity and/or assume what their illness is like day-to-day? It's easy to assume how someone with an illness is feeling. It's common to assume they are unable to cope. Though sometimes this is the case, assuming the worst can cause further emotional pain for the sufferer if untrue.

**When did you last check in and ask how they really are?**

Often a patient can be managing better than you assume. Odds are they are leading lives that in fact require great strength and perseverance.

**Always ask and know the facts.**

## 8 A Journey with Medicines

As with many illnesses, there are various medicines available for FMS patients. However, without personal experience it can be difficult to understand the journey that comes with trialing various medications. It is important to understand:



- Patients may require support whilst trialing the side effects of a new drug
- What works for one patient may not work for another
- Trialing a drug is always the patients choice (Many can become tearful after negative experiences on previous medicines)
- Patients want nothing more than to get well
- Medicines are rarely silver bullets and often only assist certain symptoms

## 9 What helps? Compassion and Communication

Understanding that:

- Patients often **lose their previous lives** and live every day with that reality.
- **For their safety**, patients must miss events if they don't have the energy.
- Patients can **sometimes struggle** to keep deadlines/plans.
- Sufferers can feel **alone, misunderstood and shame** for their illness.
- Sufferers are just as confused by Fibromyalgia as everyone else.  
This includes medical professionals and is why further research is needed.
- It **can cause stress** if family, partners or friends don't learn about FMS.
- Pain/flareups **can be managed/avoided** if a patient's support network learn:

What patients should/shouldn't eat

To ask about their energy

To avoid causing unnecessary stress

## 10 Understand the Journey

Contractors of any long-term illness, including sufferers of chronic pain, often traverse similar emotional stages. Understanding these stages can help both patients and their support network. These stages often include:

- Denial
- Victimhood & Betrayal of Mind & Body
- New Limits & Acknowledgment
- Acceptance & Perseverance
- Self-Compassion & Repair
- Gratitude

## 11 A Full Life

With correct management, FMS Sufferers can lead full and happy lives.

Management strategies can differ person to person but often include:

**Regular Exercise**   **Stress Reduction**

**Radical Diet Management**

**Increased Water Intake**

**Prioritisation of Sleep**

**Specific Vitamins and Supplements**