

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FIBROMYALGIA

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More than 10 million Americans suffer from fibromyalgia (according to the National Fibromyalgia Association), and this chronic, mysterious and complex pain syndrome (it's not considered a disease) that can be debilitating on both a physical and mental level. The initial warning signs or symptoms of Fibromyalgia, however, may seem all too common.

“Whether you're 50-plus or not, if you're tired, hurting all over and don't feel rested, especially if it's lasted for over 3 months, it's worthwhile to get evaluated by a rheumatologist, or specialist in musculoskeletal conditions,” says Scott Zashin, MD, a clinical professor of Medicine at the University of Texas, and attending physician at Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas.

But those kinds of symptoms don't necessarily mean you have Fibromyalgia, adds Zashin. “If you are over 50, you also have a higher risk of low thyroid, which can give you similar symptoms or presentation, so it's important to keep that in mind.”

But beyond physical symptoms, many Fibromyalgia sufferers may also experience mental impairment. A recent study reported that pain – more than depression, anxiety or sleeplessness -- is the primary factor behind cognitive dysfunction in patients suffering with Fibromyalgia. “Some patients may feel like they're a little foggy

of thought, which could be the result of multiple factors, so that's a tough thing to treat," says Zashin, "unfortunately, there's no magic answer for that."

But beyond making it a priority to get your symptoms properly evaluated by a specialist, here are some additional tips to consider when it comes to living with Fibromyalgia:

PACE YOURSELF

"You're going to have good days and bad days, so don't try to push yourself on those good days and try get everything done all at once," says Zashin. "And make sure you get regular aerobic exercise, such as walking, running, bicycling, or even just doing simple household chores. In addition, get adequate, restful sleep, which is also important."

HONOR YOUR SPINE

One expert says de-stressing and detoxifying the central nervous system is the key to healing fibromyalgia. Symptoms such as widespread pain, fatigue, and joint stiffness are the result of stress and toxicity of the central nervous system, according to Josh Wagner, founder of The Life House Chiropractic in New York City. "Proper spinal realignment allows the nervous system to properly send and receive messages to the brain, which manifests in a healthy, pain-free body," explains Wagner, who suggests non-traditional chiropractic care treatments that honor the spine (without 'cracking' the neck or back) such as Torque Release Technique, Upper Cervical chiropractic, and Network Chiropractic.

ENHANCE GLUTATHIONE LEVELS

According to Wagner, accumulation of both dietary and environmental toxins in the body also leads to central nervous system stress and triggers Fibromyalgia-related pain. Glutathione is a natural substance in the body, and one of the strongest cellular anti-oxidants. "People with degenerative disorders like fibromyalgia often have decreased levels of glutathione, and you can promote natural glutathione production through your diet," says Wagner, who suggests adding foods such as cooked spinach, avocado, cooked broccoli, raw eggs, raw milk (not whey powder), and organic red meat. In addition, herbal sources such as Milk Thistle and Curcumin (Turmeric), can enhance glutathione levels in the body.

CREATE RELAXATION

Exercise like those listed above and other activities which help you relax will help reduce stress, which is essential in managing your pain, says Zashin. "Control your stress, whether it's through yoga, meditation, or whatever works for you, because stress can trigger or aggravate your symptoms."