



# Exercising with FIBROMYALGIA

Getting regular exercise is one of the best ways to live well with fibromyalgia. It can help you keep your muscles strong and flexible. And it can boost chemicals in your brain that can help you feel good.

Working out may seem challenging at first. But over time, regular exercise can reduce pain and fatigue. The key is to start small and build up slowly.

Before starting to get more active, make sure to talk with your doctor about what activities would be best for you. Once you get your doctor's OK, follow these tips to create a workout that is right for you.

- Do some type of exercise each day.
- Choose a time of day to exercise when you feel your best.
- Choose a type of exercise you enjoy doing.
- If you can, find a friend to exercise with you.
- Start your workout when you are at your usual baseline. Do not start a program while your fibromyalgia is flaring up or you are in pain.
- Start with short amounts of physical activity, such as 5 – 10 minutes at a time. And give yourself a day or 2 between workouts. Follow the saying, "Start low, go slow." For example, you

could start by taking the stairs instead of the elevator at work. Or you could park farther away from stores when you run errands. Slowly build up the amount of activity you do over time.

- Stick with lower-impact activities such as walking, swimming, water aerobics, yoga, tai chi, and stretching. Don't use stair-climbers or run at this early stage. Try using an exercise bicycle or elliptical trainer instead.
- Remember that it takes time to get into a comfortable routine. If it hurts when you do an exercise, stop. You could try doing the exercise at a less intense level or for a smaller amount of reps or time. Or you could try another exercise. It may be normal to feel sore for a day or 2 after working out. But as you condition your muscles over time, the soreness should lessen. If you ache worse over time, this could be a sign you've done too much too soon. If so, cut back on the amount of activity you do. You may want to stick with only gentle joint movements and stretching activities until the soreness goes away. But try to stay active, and don't give up!

- Take a warm shower or bath when you are finished exercising. This will help you relax and can seem like a reward after exercising. It can also help lessen any soreness you might feel after exercising.
- Think about working with a certified personal trainer. Choose someone who has experience working with people with fibromyalgia. For many people, even a few sessions with a trainer can help. A trainer can help you set up a training program and show you how to do exercises with proper form. This can help lower your risk of injury and help you improve over time.

Ask your health care practitioner if there are any tests, referrals, or treatments that might be helpful to use along with your current treatment plan. Other treatment options may include the following: chiropractic services, physical therapy, acupuncture, nutritional services, massage therapy, medicines, and other services (such as occupational therapy).