

## Cascade Quarterly News

# FIBROMYALGIA

### What is it?

Do you seem to be tired all the time, even after you've had a full night's sleep?

Do you feel stiff every morning?

Do you ache all over?

Do you get frequent headaches?

These symptoms could be the result of stress. However, if you experience these feelings over a long period of time,

it could indicate that you have a condition called fibromyalgia. Because the symptoms are so common, many people go undiagnosed for years with this increasingly prevalent chronic pain disorder.

Next to osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia is the most common rheumatic disease. It affects approximately 2% of the population and it is estimated that up to 20%

of patients that see a rheumatologist (a doctor specializing in arthritis) are suffering from fibromyalgia.

This condition is sometimes referred to as fibrositis or fibromyositis. It usually affects women between the ages of 20 and 50. It's a syndrome that causes chronic, sometimes debilitating muscle pain. **Article continued on page 2...**

**“Next to osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia is the most common rheumatic disease”**

### It`s a Mystery

Nobody seems to know what causes fibromyalgia. Originally it was thought to be some type of arthritis, but no signs of arthritis or inflammation have been found. What has been confirmed is the fact that the onset of symptoms often follow a trauma - either a physical injury, or a situation bearing significant emotional stress.

A number of theories have been developed to explain the arrival of the mysterious

symptoms of Fibromyalg.

Some researchers hypothesize that muscles undergo microtrauma during everyday activities but are repaired during restorative sleep. People with fibromyalgia seem to have a particular sleep disturbance so that the restorative sleep stage does not occur properly.

Others believe that the nervous system causes problems with normal

circulation and as a result there is a deficiency of oxygen reaching the body tissues. This lack of oxygen, hypoxia as it is often called, has been linked to tenderness, fatigue and post-exercise soreness. There is also some evidence that the symptoms may be the result of a deficiency of certain hormones.

Although experts still don't agree on the cause, the one thing they presently do agree on is that it is a real disease.

## What is it continued...

The pain usually occurs where muscles attach to bone and is similar to the pain of arthritis.

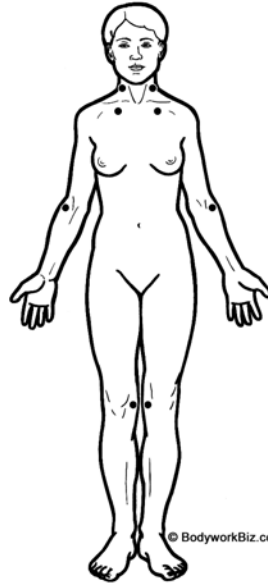
The good news is that the joints themselves are not affected. The joints do not deteriorate or become deformed as they do in some types of arthritis.

Pain is the most prominent symptom. It usually occurs in the neck, shoulders and back. People with fibromyalgia describe the pain in many ways. Some people report a stiff, aching feeling. Others describe a burning, stabbing, gnawing or radiating pain.

Pain isn't the only symptom. Many people also experience generalized stiffness. Remaining in one position for extended periods of time, for example sitting for a long car ride, can increase the stiffness. For this reason, it seems to be worse first thing in the morning.

Fatigue is another almost universal symptom. About

90% of sufferers report moderate to severe fatigue. They feel a lack of energy, less endurance with exercise, or the kind of exhaustion associated with the flu or lack of sleep. This can interfere with concentration. Even simple mental tasks can seem extremely difficult.



Other common symptoms include swelling, tender points, headaches, digestive problems, insomnia, depression and neurological problems like

numbness and tingling in the limbs.

Fibromyalgia is very difficult to diagnose because the symptoms mimic those of stress and other diseases. To add to the problem, there is no definitive laboratory test that can be done to confirm that you have the condition.

Because the diagnosis is made primarily on the basis of the reported symptoms, people with fibromyalgia have often been led to believe that it's all in their heads and that nothing is wrong.

It was not until the late 1980s and 90s that Fibromyalgia began to be accepted in the medical community as a legitimate condition. Thankfully people are now receiving the appropriate diagnosis earlier in the course of the condition, allowing them to learn to manage the symptoms better and enjoy an increased quality of life.

*According to the American College of Rheumatology, a person is considered to have fibromyalgia if they have widespread pain for three months or more along with tenderness in 11 of the 18 specific points on the body.*

## Treatment

Treatment of fibromyalgia requires a comprehensive approach. Physicians typically prescribe low doses of antidepressant medications to improve sleep, elevate mood and relax muscles. For whatever reason, anti-inflammatory medications like aspirin, Advil, Voltaren, and Naprosyn don't seem to work very well. About 75% of all fibromyalgia sufferers seek some form of alternative healthcare and massage therapy is a popular choice.

Massage can be an extremely useful tool for helping you get relief from symptoms. One study conducted by the Touch

Research Institute at the University of Miami found that 30-minute massages two times per week had a long-term effect on symptoms. In addition to being more relaxed, the subjects of the study had less pain and stiffness, reduced depression and fatigue and more comfortable sleep.

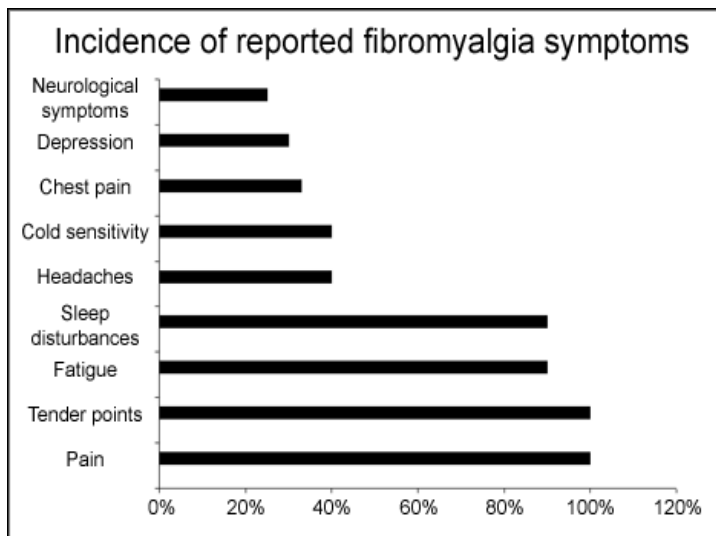
Because of the widespread tenderness, your massage therapist will likely need to adjust the pressure to make the massage comfortable. A typical one-hour session may sometimes seem too intense therefore the treatment time may need to be shortened.

Although the techniques used may vary, the massage treatment will largely focus on relaxation, circulation and stress reduction.

The relief provided by massage therapy may last anywhere from a few hours to many weeks. Communicate with your therapist to determine the ideal frequency of your sessions so that you are able to maintain a significant level of relief.

**Article continued on Page 4....**

***“Researchers at the University of Miami found that 30-minute massages two times per week had a long-term effect on fibromyalgia symptoms”***





*Sonja Rawlings,  
RMT*

1601 – 30<sup>TH</sup> AVENUE  
Vernon, BC  
V1T 2A3

Phone:  
**(250) 550-4727**

You are welcome to call me for a **free 10 minute phone consultation**. We can discuss your goals and I will answer any questions you may have about how Cascade Massage Therapy can benefit you.

The information in this newsletter is educational only and is not intended to replace the advice of your personal health care providers.

## Treatment continued....

You may also find some relief with the application of heat. Hot baths or showers, a hot water bottle or a heating pad may all be helpful in managing the symptoms. During a treatment, the therapist may put some

type of heat pack on the areas that are most tender.

Research has also shown that moderate aerobic exercises like walking and swimming can help alleviate painful

symptoms. Start off slowly. Monitor your response to exercise before increasing the duration and intensity.

Ask your therapist for suggestions.

## About Cascade Massage Therapy

### My Approach

***I bring over 18 years of bodywork experience and education to the massage table!*** I offer you diverse and comprehensive massage therapy sessions. Your treatment goals are foremost and your needs will be heard and addressed. I utilize both traditional and alternative treatment techniques, and recommend self care tips and exercise options that evolve with your individual healing process.

***My intention is to be a facilitator in the cascade of your healing process and health maintenance.*** I believe that within the human body is the desire and ability to be well, and through

bodywork, I serve to act as a catalyst for this process.

***This is your time*** - I encourage you to enjoy the stillness of your session, and sense the changes occurring in your body while we work - you don't need to be entertaining or start a conversation; that being said, please recognize that I do not read minds. I expect my clients to participate in his or her experience and give feedback when there is any discomfort during the treatment.

***Cascade Massage Therapy is focused on education and prevention.*** It is important that you know what you can do to help prevent stress, tension, and pain when you are not with me. I allow for time at the end of our session to converse, suggest self care tips and exercises that would be beneficial for you, and answer any questions that you may have.

I believe that prolonged stress, whether environmental, physical or emotional is a primary factor in dis-ease and a true obstacle to healing. Therefore, ***I welcome you to a peace-filled and relaxing environment where you can experience relief from pain and tension.***