

## So What Can Be Done

Much can be done to relieve FMS, lighten the symptom load and return at least some of your function. Much of this is under your control. It's important for you to take on the responsibility of managing your own treatment. It isn't easy, and it takes concentrated focus to change the habits of a lifetime. Getting as well as possible — optimizing your quality of life — takes commitment and patience. You didn't get where you are overnight, and there are no quick fixes. One of the best hopes in the challenge to regain function and well-being is education.

*At **EntireCare**, we have developed a program consisting of an evaluation and treatment including myofascial release, soft tissue mobilization, exercise, lifestyle changes, energy conservation and a home program.*

Resources for this article were obtained from Dr. Devin Starlanyl's book "Fibromyalgia & Chronic Myofascial Pain Syndrome" and website.

*At **EntireCare**, we understand the importance of good health, exercise and daily activity.*

*That is why our mission is to improve the health of the people and communities we serve.*

*With a physician's order, most insurance companies will cover some or all of the cost associated with these programs.*

***EntireCare** will be happy to assist you in determining your coverage.*

**EntireCare** is located within Verde Valley Medical Center, 269 S. Candy Lane, Cottonwood, off W. State Route 89A. Please enter through the Outpatient Services entrance.

**For more information contact:**



**(928) 639-6383**



## FIBROMYALGIA

**Not a Catchall Diagnosis**



## Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS)

FMS is not a catchall, "wastebasket" diagnosis. FMS is a state of central sensitization. This means that your central nervous system may be unusually sensitive to pain (hyperalgesia) and may find certain sounds, vibrations, light, and other sensations to be translated by your body into discomfort or pain.

Fibromyalgia is not yet considered a disease. Diseases have known causes and well-understood mechanisms for producing symptoms. FMS is a syndrome, which means it is a specific set of signs and symptoms that occur together. Syndromes are no less serious or potentially disabling than diseases. Rheumatoid arthritis and lupus also are classified as syndromes. Lab tests for FMS do not exist at this time. Lab tests are valid only to check for co-existing conditions.

FMS is not an inflammatory condition and can occur at any age. Most patients, when questioned carefully, reveal their symptoms began at an early age. Although FMS syndrome is seen more frequently in women, men also can be affected by this syndrome.

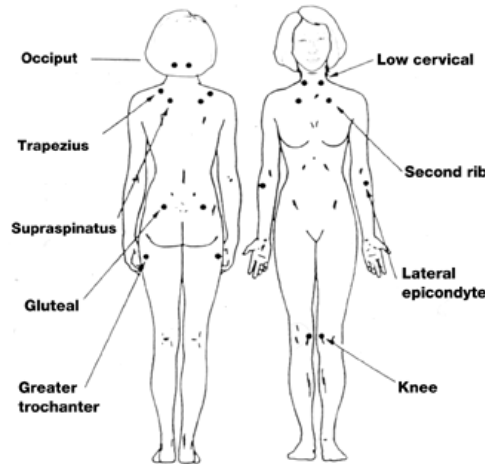
FMS sensitizes nerve endings as well as the rest of the autonomic nervous system. The actual ends of the nerve receptors may have changed shape, turning touch and other receptors into pain receptors. Pain signals then bombard your brain. The brain knows pain is a danger signal — an indication that something is wrong and needs attention — so it mobilizes its defenses. Then, when those defenses aren't used, it becomes anxious.

## So How Is FMS Diagnosed?

The cause of FMS remains elusive, but there are many triggering events thought to precipitate its onsets. A few examples are infection, cumulative trauma both physical and emotional, stress and illness.

In all cases many of these symptoms will exist:

- You need at least 11 of the 18 specified tender points



- Tender points hurt when pressed gently, but do not refer pain elsewhere
- Tender points must be present in all four quadrants of the body
- History of widespread pain more or less continuous for at least three months
- Fatigue
- Insomnia or sleep-related problems
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Chronic headaches
- Impaired memory and thought processes
- Skin sensitivities
- Dry mouth and eyes

## Treatment

- Medication to diminish pain and improve sleep
- Physical therapy
- Relaxation, lifestyle changes and exercises for stretching and cardiovascular conditioning
- Energy conservation
- Education to help you cope with FMS
- Support groups
- Nutrition



Restorative sleep plays a crucial role in FMS. Our body heals and many neurotransmitters are balanced during deep sleep, and without it we soon suffer from the effects of sleep deprivation. It isn't enough that you spend eight hours in bed. When you wake, you must feel refreshed and restored. Lack of restorative sleep is a major perpetuating factor of FMS, and you may need to work with your care provider to find medications that can help. Learning how to handle stress is also important. Avoiding stimulants such as sugar and caffeine also may be necessary.