

## **Fibromyalgia**

### **Introduction**

Fibromyalgia is a condition that seems on the rise. Just identifying a name for the condition has created a lot of turmoil, because there are a lot of overlapping complaints with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME, Post-Viral Syndrome). In a trial published in *Clinical Infectious Diseases* (1994), it was stated that there is no real difference between primary juvenile Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in the same age group. In a different trial by Buchwald et al (*Archives of Internal Medicine*, 1994) concludes that it is not possible to make any distinction between patients with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome or multiple chemical sensitivity.

The most commonly-used definition for fibromyalgia states: Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain syndrome consisting of general muscle pains, stiffness and so-called tender points (areas of heightened pain sensations in the body), accompanied by fatigue, sleeping disorders, headaches, anxiety, depression and irritable bowel symptoms (*Journal of Internal Medicine* 1994, *Arthritis & Rheumatism* 1993, *The Lancet* 1993).

To variable degrees, a growing number of people suffer from this syndrome, for which no clear-cut cause has yet been found. Sufferers appear healthy and frequently have normal blood test results. This regularly leads general practitioners, specialists, occupational physicians, employers and society in general, to deny the existence of this syndrome. Unfounded referrals to psychiatrists and psychologists, the use of sleeping pills, tranquillizers and antidepressants, an inability to cope with daily life in general, and work in particular resulting in job loss are only some of the unpleasant consequences

## Symptoms

Diagnosing fibromyalgia occurs on the basis of medical history and specific complaints, since objective criteria to support the diagnosis do not exist at this time. In order to reach a proper diagnosis, other causes of muscle pains and fatigue, such as rheumatic (auto-immune) diseases, certain infections, multiple sclerosis, anemia and thyroid dysfunction need to be excluded.

In fibromyalgia, the most frequently occurring complaints are:

- general muscle pains and/or muscle weakness; joint pains;
- presence of tender points;
- fatigue;
- sleeping disorders;
- headache;
- anxiety;
- depression;
- gastro-intestinal complaints;
- allergies and/or intolerances;
- concentration and memory problems;
- raised body temperature;
- lymph node swelling.

Although research has been under way to identify the cause of fibromyalgia, most experts now agree that the condition is a complex multifactor one. This means that a group of factors may be responsible for developing the condition. For instance, intestinal infections with parasites, yeasts or moulds may lead to food sensitivities (intolerances), weakening of the immune system and/or liver detoxification abnormalities. This weakening leads to a greater susceptibility for infections. Thus, a multitude of complex factors leads to burdening the body in such a way that it becomes overstressed and fibromyalgia may be the result. So, only treating one aspect is not sufficient; the entire complex should be addressed to strengthen the body in the broadest sense of the word.

## Diagnosics

Fibromyalgia is diagnosed through elimination. Research published in *Arthritis & Rheumatism* (1994) by Simms et al, shows that there is no real difference in muscle metabolism in fibromyalgia patients compared to healthy people. This contradicts the hypothesis that local metabolic abnormalities may be responsible for the pain experienced in the tender points. In an overview article published in the *Journal of Internal Medicine* (1994), Lorenzen clearly states that there is no proof whatsoever that fibromyalgia is a muscle disease.

Other diseases that may give rise to fibromyalgia-type complaints need to be excluded first. Conventional blood tests are performed to exclude anemia, low iron stores, thyroid dysfunction, autoimmune disease and certain infections.

A large number of fibromyalgia patients suffer from food intolerances, most of them without knowing it. It is impossible to demonstrate the presence of food intolerances when using conventional laboratory methods such as skin scratch tests or RAST tests.

For this reason the Amsterdam Kliniek uses a very advanced test procedure: the neutrophile test. A drop of the patient's blood is mixed with a drop of food concentrate. Next, an adjusted hematology analyzer (machine that examines blood cells) measures certain changes in neutrophiles (specific kind of white blood cell) through direct current and radio wave frequencies. The changes in these neutrophiles reflect of the presence of food intolerances with a great degree of reliability.

In the past the IgG(4) antibody test was used. This test shows the presence of IgG(4) antibodies. These are slow-reacting antibodies that generally don't appear in the blood until 24-48 hours later in response to a food that is not well tolerated. In the end, the reliability of this test left too much to be desired and we abandoned it altogether and replaced it by the neutrophile test.

A diet based on the results of the neutrophile test often leads to a reduction or the disappearance of all kinds of complaints such as headache (migraine), emotional complaints, intestinal problems and, last but not least, muscle aches and fatigue.



Quite often, the blood sugar (glucose) regulatory system is disturbed, characterized by strongly fluctuating glucose levels that show dramatic drops during the course of the day (hypoglycemia). Spontaneous hypoglycemia may manifest itself in the form of headaches, sleeplessness, sweating, shakiness, irritability, anxiety and panic attacks, hyperventilation and depression, as well as bouts of fatigue, mental fog, weakness and a craving for sweets. It is true that many patients tend to feel better after eating, but this is generally a short-lived improvement. A standard glucose tolerance test cannot reveal hypoglycemia - on the other hand, an extended (5-hour) glucose tolerance test can. Unfortunately, these days this test is rarely performed by conventional laboratories.

Other useful tests could be:

- a blood test to analyze the hormonal status and correct imbalances using bioidentical hormones
- a blood test to analyze the presence of heavy metals accumulated from the environment
- a blood analysis to determine vitamin and trace mineral deficiencies

## **Treatment**

After assessing possible contributing factors (based on the patient's history, physical examination and diagnostic tests), a treatment plan is drawn up.

### **Diet**

The prime focus of the treatment regime is an individualized, hypoallergenic elimination diet, which temporarily excludes the offending foods. This is supported by orthomolecular nutritional supplements such as vitamins, minerals and enzymes. As long as they are taken in the proper doses, these substances, which are inherent to the body, quite often promote considerable improvement. This result is obtained because these orthomolecular substances compensate for possible shortages, activate the immune system and raise the energy production in the cells of the body.

The diet is based on the aforementioned neutrophile test results, glucose tolerance test (if applicable) or other specific complaints. Many complaints quite often disappear on a hypoallergenic diet, whereas before, the relationship between food and specific complaints had gone unrecognized. Muscle pains also often diminish dramatically.

### **Intestinal restoration**

In many cases it is necessary to restore the balance in the intestines. This is done by eradicating uninvited visitors (parasites, yeasts, moulds), replenishing beneficial bacteria (probiotics) and restoring the intestinal mucosa, which is sometimes porous, also known as leaky gut.

### **Vitamin administration**

Administration of vitamins and minerals leads to improvement of restorative processes in many fibromyalgia patients. This is not only due to activating the immune system and raising the energy production in the cells of the body, but also because certain food supplements help the body detoxify. This detox eliminates heavy metals that may have accumulated in the body.

Although rest and relaxation exercises, as well as physical therapy may play a role in the treatment, in the long run these do not lead to significant improvement or a cure.