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**Oh my aching body . . .
Fight Fibromyalgia The Natural Way**

If you are among the estimated three to six million people in Canada and the United States suffering from fibromyalgia, you can stop-suffering, that is. A holistic and natural approach to this painful disorder can help you reverse chronic pain and fatigue.

Originally termed "fibrositis", fibromyalgia is a prevalent type of rheumatism. Doctors classify fibromyalgia as a "syndrome," which means that it is a collection of seemingly unconnected symptoms with the main one being unaccountable pain ("myo" means muscle; "algia" means pain) in the muscles. Of those suffering from this syndrome, approximately 80% are women between the ages of twenty and fifty.

While generalized pain and stiffness are the main symptoms, they are not the only ones. To diagnose someone with fibromyalgia, doctors look for numerous other symptoms as well.

Diagnostic Criteria for Fibromyalgia

The following criteria are used to give a medical diagnosis of fibromyalgia syndrome:

- " widespread pain in all four quadrants of the body lasting for at least three months;
- " tenderness in at least 11 of the 18 specified tender points;
- " generalized aches or stiffness of at least three anatomic sites for at least three months;
- and
- " exclusion of other disorders that are known to cause similar symptoms.

Minor Diagnostic Criteria for Fibromyalgia

The minor diagnostic criteria for fibromyalgia include:

- " generalized fatigue;
- " chronic headache;
- " sleep disturbance;
- " neurological and psychological complaints;
- " joint swelling;
- " numbing or tingling sensations;
- " irritable bowel syndrome;
- " variations of symptoms in relation to activity, stress and weather changes; and
- " temporomandibular joint syndrome (TMJ).

While doctors and scientists are uncertain about the cause of fibromyalgia, they observe that it often starts after an illness, injury or trauma. In controlled clinical studies, none of the major classes of medications commonly prescribed for fibromyalgia (anti-depressants, sleep-aids, anxiolytics, sedatives, muscle relaxants, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS)) had any significant benefit to people suffering from this syndrome.

Using a natural, holistic and comprehensive approach that targets the main areas affected by the syndrome, many people experience symptom reversal or a complete recovery. I approach fibromyalgia syndrome by addressing the five main areas of progression of the disease at the same time. They include:

- 1) Dysfunction of the energy centres of the cells (mitochondria);

- 2) Altered reactions in the hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal glands (the first two are located in the brain; adrenals sit atop the kidneys);
- 3) Digestive Tract imbalances;
- 4) Nervous system irregularities; and
- 5) Build-up of toxins in the body.

What You Can Do to Heal Fibromyalgia

A Nutritional Approach

Food truly is the best medicine when it comes to virtually any disease or disorder and fibromyalgia is no different.

First, Stay clear of foods you suspect are allergens. The most common ones include wheat and gluten-containing grains such as barley, spelt, oats, rye, kamut, amaranth, and millet. Avoid milk and dairy products, sugar (in any form since it depletes the immune system-use the herbal extract stevia instead), artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, alcoholic beverages, caffeinated foods and beverages, soft drinks, food additives, colours, and preservatives, and peanuts (since the aflatoxins that grow on peanuts worsens symptoms-opt for almond butter instead). In addition to being common allergens, most of these foods cause or aggravate inflammation in the body.

So what is left, you may be wondering. Eat a diet high in raw fruits and vegetables (emphasizing the vegetables). Try to eat at least fifty percent of your foods in a raw state. While this may sound difficult, it is actually quite easy. Simply add a large, raw salad to your lunch and dinner meals, have fruit at breakfast, and snack on vegetable crudité's, raw nuts and seeds, or fruit throughout the day. Drink eight to ten cups of pure, filtered water every day (limiting the quantity with meals to ½ cup to take nutritional supplements) or freshly-made vegetable and fruit juices.

Since there are digestive troubles linked with fibromyalgia, fresh juices are an excellent way to supply the body with nutrients that are easy to assimilate. Fresh juices also contain large amounts of enzymes that help break down inflammation, reduce pain, supply the cells with energy and help the body heal. Focus primarily on vegetable juices. If you can't stand the taste add the juice of one apple. Apples are excellent food for sufferers of fibromyalgia since they supply malic acid-a compound needed to create cellular energy.

The remaining foods can comprise most vegetables, brown rice, pasta made from buckwheat, brown rice, or quinoa (without any wheat or white flour), legumes, pumpkin or sunflower seeds.

Nutritional Supplementation

I recommend the following nutritional supplements to help the body heal from fibromyalgia. The quantities vary from one person to another.

Nutritional Supplement Primary Function(s)

Multiple Vitamin and Mineral -to address underlying vitamin or mineral deficiencies;-to nourish the cells.

Flax oil -use cold-pressed flax oil (never heat) as a dressing for salads, baked potatoes, steamed vegetables, etc. to address deficiencies in

Omega-3 fatty acids required for healthy cells and immune system.

Malic acid and Additional Magnesium -people with fibromyalgia tend to be deficient in both malic acid and magnesium. These nutrients support the muscular system and energy production at the cellular level.

Liquid oxygen -I recommend Cellfood® to my clients to help oxygenate the cells, provide trace minerals, enzymes, and amino acids-all of which are needed to cleanse the body of toxins as well as rebuild the body.

Curcumin (in turmeric)

Willow bark

Co-enzyme Q-10

Cayenne

Ginger To alleviate pain and inflammation, and improve circulation to the muscles.

Lactobacillus Acidophilus and Bifidobacterium To replenish friendly bacteria in the small and large intestines, thereby increasing absorption of nutrients and lessening digestive disturbances.

Multi-enzyme and

Bromelain (enzyme in pineapple) Take an enzyme supplement with every meal to improve digestion. Take bromelain between meals to lessen inflammation in the body and to assist with detoxification.

Pantothenic Acid If the adrenal glands are severely depleted due to long-term or severe stress, supplementary pantothenic acid can help them to rebuild.

Exercise

Because the pain can be so disabling to people suffering from fibromyalgia, many people refrain from exercise that seems to worsen symptoms. However, over time, the lack of exercise weakens muscle tone, causing less blood and lymph to flow through the body and worsening symptoms. Exercise, started slowly and built up gradually over time, often improves symptoms.

A 2002 Swedish study of the effect of pool exercise on fibromyalgia sufferers over six months found lasting improvements in symptom severity, physical function and social function in participants in regular exercise.

I have had tremendous results with the above dietary, supplementation, and exercise suggestions in the management of fibromyalgia. Stop suffering. You can restore your health using the power of foods, nutrients, herbs, and exercise.

RESOURCES: For more information on this debilitating condition and information to adjust dosages of nutritional supplements for fibromyalgia, consult my book *Healing Injuries the Natural Way* (available online from www.yourhealthpress.com or Amazon.com).