

amitriptyline (Elavil) and cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril). Other antidepressant drugs can be helpful in some patients. Side effects vary by the drug. Ask your doctor about the risks and benefits of your medicine.

The other drug approved for fibromyalgia is pregabalin (Lyrica). Pregabalin and another drug, gabapentin (Neurontin), work by blocking the over activity of nerve cells involved in pain transmission. These medicines may cause dizziness, sleepiness, swelling and weight gain.

It is strongly recommended to avoid opioid narcotic medications for treating fibromyalgia. The reason for this is that research evidence shows these drugs are not helpful to most people with fibromyalgia, and will cause greater pain sensitivity or make pain persist. Tramadol (Ultram) may be used to treat fibromyalgia pain if short-term use of an opioid narcotic is needed. Over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (commonly called NSAIDs) like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve, Anaprox) are not effective for fibromyalgia pain. Yet, these drugs may be useful to treat the pain triggers of fibromyalgia. Thus, they are most useful in people who have other causes for pain such as arthritis in addition to fibromyalgia.

For sleep problems, some of the medicines that treat pain also improve sleep. These include cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril), amitriptyline (Elavil), gabapentin (Neurontin) or pregabalin (Lyrica). It is not recommended that patients with fibromyalgia take sleeping medicines like zolpidem (Ambien) or benzodiazepine medications.

Living with fibromyalgia

Even with the many treatment options, patient self-care is vital to improving symptoms and daily function. In concert with medical treatment, healthy lifestyle behaviors can reduce pain, increase sleep quality, lessen fatigue and help you cope better with fibromyalgia. With proper treatment and self-care, you can get better and live a more normal life. Here are some self-care tips for living with fibromyalgia:

- Make time to relax each day. Deep-breathing exercises and meditation will help reduce the stress that can bring on symptoms.
- Set a regular sleep pattern. Go to bed and wake up at the same time each day. Getting enough sleep lets your body repair itself, physically and mentally. Also, avoid daytime napping and limit caffeine intake, which can disrupt sleep. Nicotine is a stimulant, so those fibromyalgia patients with sleep problems should stop smoking.
- Exercise often. This is a very important part of fibromyalgia treatment. While difficult at first, regular exercise often reduces pain symptoms and fatigue. Patients should follow the saying, "Start low, go slow." Slowly add daily fitness into your routine. For instance, take the stairs instead of the elevator, or park further away from the store. As your symptoms decrease with drug treatments, start increasing your activity. Add in some walking, swimming, water aerobics and/or stretching exercises, and begin to do things that you stopped doing because of your pain and other symptoms. It takes time to create a comfortable routine. Just get moving, stay active and don't give up!
- Educate yourself. Nationally recognized organizations like the Arthritis Foundation and the National Fibromyalgia Association are great resources for information. Share this information with family, friends and co-workers.
- Look forward, not backward. Focus on what you need to do to get better, not what caused your illness.

Source: American College of Rheumatology.