

Fibromyalgia and rehabilitation

Toronto Rehab's Chronic Pain Service, which is part of the Neuro Rehabilitation Program, helps people with fibromyalgia and other forms of chronic pain learn about their disorders, explore different pain management strategies to identify what is most effective for them, and develop a professional and peer support network.

What is fibromyalgia?

- Fibromyalgia (FM) is a chronic pain syndrome that is characterized by widespread pain, multiple tender points, fatigue, sleep disturbance, problems with concentration and memory, and often psychological distress.
- The pain of FM can vary in quality (i.e. burning, tingling, numbness, aching) and in intensity. FM can develop gradually or its onset can be attributed to sudden injuries, viral illness, surgery, infections, emotional trauma, or physical or emotional stress. The exact cause is unknown and there is no cure.
- For those with severe symptoms, FM can be extremely debilitating. It can interfere with basic daily activities and have a large emotional and social impact, not only on the lives of those who experience it — but on their families, friends and colleagues.

Facts about fibromyalgia

- Three to six per cent of people have fibromyalgia, one of the most common chronic pain conditions. Approximately 1.2 million Canadians have FM.
- Women account for 75-90% of people with FM, but it also occurs in men and children of all ethnic groups.
- FM is often seen in families, among siblings or mothers and their children.
- The incidence of FM increases with age and is most common in women over 50.
- People with FM also experience: stiffness; numbness; joint swelling; dry eyes; temperature sensitivity; food, medication and other allergies; weight gain; depression; headaches; irritable bowel and bladder; chest wall pain; chronic fatigue syndrome; and jaw dysfunction.
- As the population ages, the number of Canadians diagnosed with FM will increase dramatically, as will the cost to the health care system. Rehabilitation is an integral part of Canada's solution to this challenge.

Toronto Rehab's expert fibromyalgia rehabilitation

- At Toronto Rehab, rehabilitation is the interdisciplinary process of helping people who experience disabling injury, illness and conditions associated with aging to regain the skills, abilities, confidence and independence they need to live their lives to the fullest.

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- Rehabilitation can improve quality of life for people with fibromyalgia by helping them learn to manage their pain and other symptoms in order to improve their daily function in daily activities and their overall quality of life.
- Rehabilitation treatment for FM involves an individualized program combining light exercise, education, nutrition changes, support groups, adaptation, physical therapy, heat, medication and cognitive-behavioural strategies.
- Toronto Rehab, through its Chronic Pain Service, is the only hospital in the Toronto area to offer a group-based cognitive-behavioural program specifically for FM. The service offers self-management groups led by occupational therapists and physiotherapists, as well as a program of gentle exercises in a heated pool. Research suggests that group-based therapy, combined with exercise and lifestyle management strategies, offers the best outcomes for people with FM.
- In order to ensure our patients and others around the world can benefit from the newest therapies, methods and equipment, leading-edge research is at the centre of all care Toronto Rehab provides. Through close collaboration between Toronto Rehab researchers and clinicians, innovations in research are rapidly translated to the clinical setting.

For more information

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