

## Exercising with Fibromyalgia

For those diagnosed with fibromyalgia (loosely defined as arthritis of the muscles), exercise can seem to be an insurmountable task. They are chronically tired, sore and just not feeling well. Most people assume that when they feel tired and sore that rest is best. This is not necessarily true with fibromyalgia. With too much rest, bones, joints and muscles become weaker. It's important to find the proper level of physical activity to prevent muscle loss and bone weakening. Studies prove that after several weeks of moderate exercise, those with fibromyalgia are sleeping better, moving around better, and just generally feel good. They are probably getting a good dose of endorphins (those "feel good" chemicals in your brain) and their fatigue level is decreasing.

Each person with fibromyalgia may have different symptoms. Some have just the tiredness that goes with it while others have certain "trigger points" that bother them. Along with this, each exercise program has to be specialized for that certain person. The key is to start slowly and gradually add to your program over time. The three key components are stretching, aerobic activity and strength training. Incorporate an aerobic activity such as walking or bike riding that involve continuous muscle movement. Step aerobics may not be the best option with the changing of the routines. Start your strength training with a few large muscle group exercises (chest, back, and legs) and keep the exercises at a low intensity to start. Stretch after your aerobic and strength training workout when your muscles are good and warmed up. This will alleviate soreness and wind your workout down. Your goal is to exercise in ways that do not leave your muscles sore and tired, so ease into your program.

Keep an exercise log and record your progress and how you feel. This way you can track what exercises feel good and which ones don't. Be patient and your new program will work out for you.