

Teen Health Update

Who Has Fibromyalgia? It Might Not Be Who You Think


(NAPSA)—You’ve probably seen the many commercials for fibromyalgia drugs on TV. They usually feature middle-aged women describing unexplained aches and pains. Although fibromyalgia most often affects adults, it can also develop in childhood and go undiagnosed for years in patients who often suffer in silence.

According to the American College of Rheumatology (ACR), juvenile primary fibromyalgia syndrome (JPFS) typically develops between the ages of 13 and 15, although the symptoms can develop much earlier. Children and teens with JPFS feel pain that interferes with daily life and often have difficulty sleeping. Although it’s not entirely clear how many children are affected by JPFS, the ACR estimates that it is anywhere between 2 percent and 7.5 percent of children in North America and Europe.

The symptoms can be so severe that adolescents with JPFS miss a lot of time in school and withdraw from social activities. The Journal of Pediatric Psychology recently reported that the rate of home-schooling among teens with fibromyalgia was more than 10 percent higher than the national average of about 2 percent.

Prevalence of Fibromyalgia in Adolescents



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Because their symptoms are so vague, teens with JPFS are often told by physicians that they are experiencing growing pains or suffering from depression. It can take years for teens to get an accurate diagnosis. What’s worse, even once they are diagnosed properly, there are no medications approved by the FDA for the treatment of fibromyalgia in patients younger than 18.

Lynne Matallana, founder of the National Fibromyalgia Association (NFA), is all too familiar with the difficulties that teens with fibromyalgia and their parents face. “Very little research has been done on fibromyalgia in children and teens,” Matallana said. “Current clinical trials, like the MyFi study for teenagers, help in the search to find a safe and effective treatment for JPFS.”

Parents who are aware of a family history of fibromyalgia, especially among female family members, should be watchful for the signs and symptoms in their children. Blood relatives of patients with fibromyalgia have a higher prevalence of the disease and tend to be more sensitive to pain than the general population.

Because of the lack of treatment options for JPFS, clinical trials for potential drugs are currently under way to determine if they are safe and effective for teens.

The **MyFi study** for teens with fibromyalgia is currently recruiting patients at study sites across the United States. For more information on this research, please visit www.MyFiTrial.com or call (866) 692-1317.