



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## “Invisible Illness” Impacts More Than 5 Million Americans

(NAPSA)—More than 5 million Americans are living with fibromyalgia, one of the most common, chronic pain conditions in the U.S. For these people, understanding the possible causes of the condition can help provide new hope and ways of working with their doctor to better manage the pain that can impact their lives.

### An “Invisible” Illness

Fibromyalgia is often called an “invisible” illness because it can be difficult to diagnose and those who have it typically do not look sick. The condition is much more common in women, who account for 80–90 percent of diagnosed cases, commonly between the ages of 35 and 60. Fibromyalgia can have a significant effect on people’s lives, impacting their ability to work and engage in everyday activities.

### The Signs

Symptoms of fibromyalgia may include:

1. Pain for more than three months
2. Tenderness
3. Ongoing, deep ache all over
4. Fatigue
5. Stiffness
6. Trouble sleeping
7. Difficulty remembering simple things and/or concentrating.

Although the cause of fibromyalgia is still not fully known, some research shows that fibromyalgia may be caused by abnormalities in how the body processes and responds to pain. People with fibromyalgia may feel a heightened sensitivity to stimuli that are not normally painful; for someone with fibromyalgia, even a hug or a handshake may be painful. Many patients suffer for years and see numerous doctors before being diagnosed and treated.



**Managing the pain caused by fibromyalgia is an important step for people to take control.**

### The Good News

Fortunately, there are ways to help manage the painful condition. Explained Penney Cowan, founder and executive director, American Chronic Pain Association: “Many people living with fibromyalgia mistakenly believe that pain is something they need to learn to live with. I encourage any person experiencing chronic, widespread pain and tenderness to talk to a health care provider about fibromyalgia and start the journey toward taking control back in their lives.”

### What To Do

Following a diagnosis of fibromyalgia, it’s important to work in partnership with a health care provider to manage the condition. Strategies may include:

- Lifestyle modifications, such as exercise and relaxation techniques
- Behavioral support
- Over-the-counter and prescription medications.

### Learn More

For resources and additional information about fibromyalgia, visit [www.fibrocenter.com](http://www.fibrocenter.com).