

Recovery from Fibromyalgia

by author Randy Gomm, BSc

My experience with fibromyalgia began about 10 years ago. I was a healthy, active 36-year-old male employed as a firefighter for 11 years. I admit I was a bit of an adrenaline junkie. I enjoyed outdoor pursuits like white-water kayaking. I volunteered as a member of ski patrol and a mountain rescue team.

My problems started with knee pain I believed had been caused by pushing my body too hard, but the usual rest and rehab did little to relieve my pain. Six months later, I also developed pain in my wrists, ankles, thumbs and tailbone. Any body part I overused would have acute pain the next day. I quickly learned that if I ignored the pain and carried on, my symptoms just got worse.

I finally reached the stage where I could barely walk a city block or write in my journal. I knew I was in trouble when I couldn't hold onto a coffee mug or turn a doorknob with one hand because it caused such severe joint pain.

Fortunately, I had supportive friends and family. At one point my resourceful and patient mother was even researching journals from university libraries on my behalf. She would read them to me over the phone as I lay in bed with the receiver propped up against my ear. I will be forever grateful to her. I don't know how I could have coped without all the support.

Searching For Answers

I underwent numerous lab tests and visits to several specialists. Since nothing showed up on these tests, one doctor even suggested that it must be "all in my head." I was fortunate enough to have a very kind doctor who knew me from the rescue team days and believed my symptoms were real. He referred me to another rheumatologist who ultimately diagnosed me with fibromyalgia.

My diagnosis managed to satisfy the insurance company so I could collect long-term disability. Then about eight months after I had been off work, another firefighter in my four-man crew came down with similar symptoms of fatigue and muscle pain. He, too, was unable to work and the lightbulb came on: maybe we had been exposed to some toxins at work!

I started to research the symptoms of toxic exposure and discovered that many were identical to those of fibromyalgia. In 1996, I attended a three-day conference during which many leading researchers in fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome revealed that most of their patients had problems with detoxification. The toxic load of these patients was generally high, but if they worked at reducing it, their symptoms often improved dramatically. This explanation made sense to me. I had already met people who had fully recovered from fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. They had all followed similar programs: improving their diets, reducing their stress levels, starting a gradual exercise program and doing some major detoxifying through herbs, supplements and sauna use. With this in mind, I began my climb from the bottom of the barrel!

On The Road To Wellness

Most people with fibromyalgia have a problem sleeping. I started out with a low-dose sleeping medication and then switched to St John's wort.

I removed all the toxic cleaners from my home. I tried to minimize my exposure to perfumes and colognes (petroleum-based products) and new items that emitted gases. (Chances are, if a manufactured product has a strong odor, it's releasing chemicals.)

I had the "silver" amalgams—which actually contain 50 percent mercury—removed from my teeth by a dentist who specializes in the removal process. I went through a series of chelation treatments with DMPS to lower my body mercury levels.

Any kind of sweating is helpful. It reduces toxic load while taking stress off the liver. I use a whole-body infrared sauna to sweat out toxins and heavy metals. Even though this kind of sauna has a comfortable temperature between 110-130°F, users still sweat significantly. The infrared heat also penetrates the skin and causes significant pain relief.

Research has shown that those with fibromyalgia have low tissue oxygen levels. Although an

aerobic exercise program might be beneficial, for most people with fibromyalgia it would be too giant a step. One trick I learned is to very slowly increase the intensity and duration of any exercise. I walked faithfully at a rubberized track and increased my distance and speed over many months. I always followed with lots of gentle stretching.

I tried numerous diets on my roller-coaster ride to recovery. I ate organically grown food and avoided anything processed. I made my diet more alkaline with fruit and vegetables and by adding sea vegetables to soups and stews. A small glass of apple cider vinegar sipped during a meal helped my indigestion.

I eliminated all sugars so as not to feed the fungi and other critters that were thriving in my body. (Parasites and fungi produce endotoxins which add to the body's toxic load.) Stevia was a great sugar substitute, while kefir assisted in reestablishing my friendly bacteria. Last but not least, I also made sure to get my essential fatty acids.

Vroom, Vroom!

Grapeseed extract was very beneficial in reducing my pain levels. I took minerals daily, especially trace minerals and magnesium citrate. I am a great fan of S-Adenosylmethionine (SAM-e) for improving liver function and reducing pain. I often rotated different herbs and supplements to help my over-stressed liver. Fibromyalgia patients have problems with malabsorption, often because of intestinal dysbiosis, so they are low in many vital nutrients.

If you have fibromyalgia, don't make the mistake I did by introducing too many new things at once. If you react and your pain levels increase too much, you won't know the cause. Instead, start off with a small dose and wait a few days before increasing.

During my healing process, I was off work for eight years, but have been back working full-time for the past two years. Even though I'm not 100 percent yet, I'm getting closer all the time.

I refuse to buy the common perception that fibromyalgia is a life sentence. I truly believe one can fully recover. It's a lot of work but the rewards at the end of the journey make it well worth it.

Randy Gomm resides in Vancouver, BC and is an independent researcher investigating various detoxification protocols.

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