

DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia is a complex condition with dozens of potential symptoms, but understanding your condition is the first step to taking control of it. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Tender Point	Eighteen places around the body that are used to identify the widespread pain of fibromyalgia. In a tender-point exam, the doctor puts pressure on each of these places and asks which ones hurt.
Central Sensitization	The most widely accepted theory about the underlying mechanisms of fibromyalgia. Having central sensitization means that your body may overreact to pain, noise, light, fragrances, or just about anything.
Flare & Remission	Periods of increased fibromyalgia symptoms are called flares. Periods of no symptoms or milder symptoms are called remissions. Often, flares are triggered by predictable things, such as hormonal fluctuations or stressful events. Other times, a flare may strike with no obvious causes.
Neurotransmitter	Chemicals in your brain that transmit electronic messages from one cell to the next. In fibromyalgia, several neurotransmitters are believed to be out of balance or used improperly by the brain.
Hyperalgesia	A rare type of excessive pain and one of the defining features of fibromyalgia. The nervous system (brain and nerves) amplify pain signals, essentially "turning up the volume." This means that something that would normally be mildly uncomfortable can be severely painful.
Allodynia	Another rare pain type common in fibromyalgia that's caused by something that shouldn't be painful. This can include clothes brushing against your skin, a light touch, or moderately cold air.
Paresthesia	Abnormal nerve sensations, such as zings, tingling, burning, itching, crawling sensations, or even numbness.
Cognitive Dysfunction	An umbrella term for multiple problems that can include poor short-term memory, inability to multitask, slow mental processing, and more. These symptoms can range from mild to severe.
SSRI/SNRI Drugs	Classes of antidepressant medications that are often prescribed for fibromyalgia. These drugs are believed to be effective against fibromyalgia symptoms because they help correct neurotransmitter dysregulation.
Antiepileptic Drugs	A class of drugs that are able to improve fibromyalgia symptoms in some people, which is believed to be due to changes in neurotransmitter function.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your fibromyalgia.

About Symptoms

- Are my symptoms typical of fibromyalgia?
- Will my symptoms get worse over time?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Are you able to pinpoint why I got this?
- Are my children (or other close family members) at risk? What can they do to lower their risk?

About Diagnosis

- What tests will I need?
- How long will the diagnostic process take?
- Do my tests indicate that anything else may be going on?

About Treatment

- What medications are likely to help?
- What side effects should I watch for?
- How can I wean off of my medications safely?
- What if this drug doesn't work?
- What about supplements or complementary/alternative treatments?

About Coping

- How do I deal with depression?
- Should I see a therapist to adjust to living with a chronic illness?
- Do you know of any good support groups in the area?

About Living With Fibromyalgia

- What kinds of activities should I do?
- What kinds of activities should I avoid?
- Should I stop working?
- What positive changes can I make to my diet?
