



Cumbria Advisory Thyroid Service

INFORMATION SHEET



This information form has been produced by C.A.T.S. to aid the possible diagnosis of Thyroid Disease, Fibromyalgia, M.E./C.F.S. If you complete the form and take it to your doctor, they will then decide the appropriate tests that are needed to obtain an accurate diagnosis. C.A.T.S. can only advise on Thyroid conditions however for advice on the other health conditions we can provide you with other support numbers for groups trained in these specialist areas.

THYROID / FIBROMYALGIA

Doctors often consider neurological or rheumatologic conditions to be present in patients with joint and /or muscle pains. Owing to the many emotional and physical symptoms of an underactive thyroid closely mirroring those of fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome, hypothyroid patients may also end up being misdiagnosed with one of these two conditions.

Whether the thyroid disorder triggered the fibromyalgia or chronic fatigue syndrome is not clear. The answer may lie with the fibromyalgia affecting the immune system and there is already a vastly complex relationship between the brain, endocrine system and the immune system. So what came first has to be left unanswered and the instead the symptoms dealt with. Alongside chronic pain and fatigue, there is the depression that is ongoing even after treatment for hypothyroidism.

Fibromyalgia may begin following an emotional stress, such as traffic accident or work related accident. Others may have had depression in the past. One theory is that stress triggered the fibromyalgia by making the pituitary gland slow down the manufacture of growth hormones.

Equally thyroid imbalance could be a possible precipitating factor for or even the direct cause of fibromyalgia. In this case correcting the thyroid imbalance promptly should halt the cycle of symptoms and the worsening of the fibromyalgia. However, in some patients the fibromyalgia will take on a life of its own and may not resolve after treatment of the underactive thyroid. It can also be triggered following treatment of an overactive thyroid.

Fibromyalgia affects approximately 5% of the population and accounts for 20% of referrals to rheumatologists, mostly women between 20 and 50 years of age. These present with symptoms of pain in joints and muscles, limited mobility, other symptoms such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), urinary frequency, sleep disturbance, anxiety, irritability and depression.

Other conditions have to be eliminated such as rheumatoid arthritis, Sjogrens syndrome (related to RA with dry eyes and mouth symptoms), polymyalgia rheumatica, polymyositis (weakness and wasting of the muscles) and lupus. Raynaud's (whitening and stiffening of the fingers) and Sjogrens syndrome can also be suffered simultaneously with fibromyalgia.

Fibromyalgia can take many years before correct diagnosis. It can be crippling, however, if found early enough can lead to correcting treatment which at the moment consists of small doses of tricyclic antidepressants such as amitriptyline (also a pain reliever) taken at night. Other measures are taking a muscle relaxant, which is best taken at night. Correct physiotherapy, keeping mobility going and avoiding staying still for too long should help the condition to be managed effectively. Meditation and relaxation exercises should also help. Recent research showed that T3 (Cytomel) administered at high doses daily could in some cases resolve all of the symptoms of fibromyalgia. However, these high doses daily can produce adverse effects, and lower doses are better tolerated and may help to relieve some of the symptoms.

It has been found that more research needs to be done with regards to the T3 intervention with hypothyroid patients with the above symptoms. At the moment the common treatment is with amitriptyline and pain relief measures which do not offer any permanent hope of curing this disabling condition.

See overleaf for an assessment questionnaire, giving you an indication of this condition:

Symptoms common to *fibromyalgia*, *chronic fatigue syndrome* and *hypothyroidism*:

- Indicate whether you have been experiencing each of the following symptoms:
- ***For any symptoms that you answer “YES” to, please indicate the severity to which you have experienced them (1=mild, 2= moderate, 3=severe)***

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|-------|----|-------|
| FATIGUE | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| LACK OF ENDURANCE | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| DIZZINESS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| JOINT STIFFNESS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| DEPRESSION | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ANXIETY | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| MUSCLE WEAKNESS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| HEADACHES | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| WORSENING PMS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| MOOD SWINGS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| IRRITABILITY | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| WORD MIX-UP | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| JOINT PAINS & ACHES | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| SWOLLEN FINGERS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| BRAIN FOG | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| PANIC ATTACKS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| MEMORY BLANKS | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |

TOTAL SCORE: _____ If you score higher than 15, you may be suffering from any of the above – proceed on to the following questions:

Have you suffered for six months from fatigue, even at rest and if you has it interfered with your ability to work or interact in social and personal activities? **YES = 10 NO = 0**

Do you feel exhausted, dizzy and about to faint after a hot shower? **YES = 5 NO = 0**

Do you feel drained and exhausted for more than 24 hours after exercising? **YES = 5 NO = 0**

Did your symptoms begin abruptly? **YES = 5 NO = 0**

Have you experienced, since the onset of the fatigue, but not before, any of the following symptoms in a persistent or recurring fashion? If so, score the severity of each symptom as follows: **1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = severe:**

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|----|-------|
| ▪ Changing joint pains | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Bad days, good days | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Trouble sleeping * | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| * especially in the middle of night | | | | |
| ▪ Visual blurring | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Increased thirst | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Dry eyes, dry mouth | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Rapid heartbeat | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Loss of appetite | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Nausea | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| ▪ Severe malaise | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |

If your score is 25 or higher, you may be suffering from Fibromyalgia, or chronic fatigue syndrome – continue onwards:

- ✓ **Have you had for at least the past three months, pains or aching in many parts of your body, affecting both sides of the body (right and left), above and below the waist and in the mid-body (that is any part of the spine)? YES = 5 NO = 0**
- ✓ **Has your doctor been able to trigger pain by pressing on eleven of the eighteen spots on your body called “trigger points” (e.g. elbow, wrist, knee, etc)? YES = 10 NO = 0**
- ✓ **Have you experienced any of the following symptoms? If so score the severity of each symptom as follows: 1 = mild, 2 = moderate, 3 = severe**

- | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|----|-------|
| • Muscle spasms | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| • Numbness and tingling | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| • Sensitivity of your eyes to light | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| • Bruising | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| • Irritable bladder | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| • Irritable bowel | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |
| • Eye pains | YES | _____ | NO | _____ |

TOTAL SCORE: _____

If your score is 25 or higher you may be suffering from fibromyalgia. Take this questionnaire and consult with your doctor as soon as possible. You need to be relieved of the symptoms in order to gain a better quality of life.

REF: The Thyroid Solution, Ridha Arem, M.D.

For further information – Fibromyalgia Association UK, PO Box 206, Stourbridge, West Midlands, DY6 8YL. Fax: 01848 69467. Email: fms@cablenet.co.uk

C.A.T.S RECOMMENDS YOU ALWAYS SEEK YOUR DOCTORS ADVICE

Disclaimer

The purpose of this information leaflet is to help those suffering with thyroid disease. Whilst every effort is made to provide accurate information, it is impossible to ensure that the information given is relevant to every individual. No responsibility is accepted by CATS and it is recommended and essential, that if in any doubt about your condition, that you should always contact your doctor, specialist physician or surgeon to seek medical advice.