

Conditions We Treat

Fibromyalgia

How Physical Therapy Can Relieve Your Fibromyalgia Pain

Most of us can deal with a little pain. We may have the occasional ache from overdoing it at the gym or a twinge from bumping our shins on the bed, but most of the time we can ignore it, take an anti-inflammatory and go about our day. But when pain is widespread throughout your body and is accompanied by fatigue, changes in mood and sleep patterns, you may be dealing with a more serious physiological condition. Sound familiar? Contact us to find out more about your symptoms and get a jump start to recovery.

What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia is a term used to describe a group of symptoms. Typically, a person who is experiencing debilitating fatigue, tender areas of the body, changes in mood or muscle pain can be diagnosed with this condition. While it is unclear what causes fibromyalgia, some believe the pain is due to an overactive sympathetic nervous system, the part of the body that activates the fight or flight response. Many people first experience symptoms after a physically or emotionally traumatic event. Others begin having pain after bouts of chronic stress or depression while some have symptoms that build over time. Fibromyalgia tends to affect women more than men and if you have a family member with the condition, you are more likely to experience it as well.

How is Fibromyalgia treated?

Since it is not a disease but a cluster of symptoms, there is no known cure for fibromyalgia. Instead, medical practitioners focus on treating the symptoms with medication. Often, if the sympathetic nervous system can be regulated with medication, the pain subsides. Doctors typically prescribe a combination of pain medications, antidepressants or anti-seizure medications to achieve this type of regulation and relieve symptoms. However, none of the typical treatments address the loss of function widespread pain often brings.

The Physical Therapy Solution

Even though fibromyalgia cannot be cured, one of the most effective ways of managing your symptoms can be found in the physical therapist's office. Studies have shown that cardiovascular exercise together with postural strengthening activities not only relieve widespread pain, but also increase energy levels, improve sleep and elevate mood. Through the course of treatment, it is possible to balance the body's ability to regulate nerve impulses, in turn alleviating your symptoms. Typically, physical therapy services will include four interrelated parts.

Cardiovascular Exercise

One of the best ways to alleviate widespread pain is through low-impact movement. This may include walking on a treadmill, water aerobics, or other exercises aimed at improving blood flow, reducing stress and increasing cardiovascular fitness. Your physical therapist will prescribe an exercise program designed for your abilities.

Muscle Strengthening & Range of Motion

When you are in pain, your natural tendency is to guard the area, or limit its movement out of fear of causing pain. This limited range of motion can weaken important muscle structures that further limit your range of motion and increase your pain levels. This vicious cycle can only be broken by working to strengthen weakened muscles and returning the range of motion to the area you have been guarding. But, how do you do that when you are in pain?

Pain Relieving Modalities

A physical therapist has a host of tools in their belt aimed at relieving pain without medication. These may include the use of manual therapy (trigger point therapy, Strain-Counterstrain, Bowen Techniques), strengthening and stretching, dry needling, cupping, ice, heat, electrical stimulation, or other therapeutic tools that can help limit your pain and retrain your body. Ask about the Class IV laser and see if you could benefit from it. Together with targeted exercise and a cardiovascular training program, it is possible to retrain your body to send and receive accurate signals without triggering widespread pain.

Regardless of where you are on your journey, it is possible to have relief from your worst symptoms through physical therapy services. **Contact us** today for more information or to schedule your evaluation and find out how we can get you on the road to recovery. Visit us at Healing Hands Physical Therapy 58 Parkland Plaza, Suite 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48103.