

Fibromyalgia fixes ^[1]

Hi Alice!

I am a 22 yr old female grad student with fibromyalgia. I was officially diagnosed about 2 years ago, but have had it my whole life. I cannot find any record of children having it. I have seen lots of ads online for things to "cure" it but they are probably scams. I am struggling with how to deal with my illness. I am always tired, very depressed and anxious, ache, migraines, am very tense, restless legs, always cold, and feel faint often. I have been on Zoloft for about six months, but do not feel much better.

What can I do to feel better!? I am poor and spend my money on massages when I can, but my grad health insurance doesn't cover massages, or acupuncture — things I see suggested. I take a bath every day because that is supposed to help. Any ideas for me? I am a mess! I need help, but am poor! What do I do?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Getting diagnosed with any long-term health condition may bring a lot of changes to your life, so learning how to manage it may take some time. Fibromyalgia ^[2] often results in symptoms such as pain, fatigue, and mood swings. Currently, the cause for this condition is unknown, and there's no cure. That said — you might find comfort in knowing that there are a variety of medications, stress reduction techniques, and exercises to help treat the symptoms that are available at little to no cost. If you feel as though your current medications and regimen aren't working for you, it may be helpful to explain this to your medical provider and come up with another treatment plan that fit both your medical needs and financial budget.

As you mentioned, antidepressants like Zoloft, muscle relaxants, or even over-the-counter pain medicines are often prescribed to relieve muscle and ligament pain that often results from fibromyalgia. For many people, these medicines provide necessary pain relief. However, since your symptoms seem to extend beyond physical pain, here are some possible techniques you may try to help alleviate them:

- **Work it out.** Many experts on fibromyalgia claim that regular physical activity is one of the

best ways to help deal with the condition. But be careful not to overdo it because in this case, no pain means greater gain! Try starting each session with light stretching and then move on to something low-impact, such as walking for five or ten minutes, slow jogging, bicycling, or swimming. Gradually, you may find you're able to lengthen the duration of each activity. In the beginning, you may feel small amounts of pain — that's okay, and it will likely dissipate over time. If physical activity is new to you, or you'd simply like additional guidance, consider seeking out resources at your campus gym.

- **Stress less.** Dealing with stress in a healthy manner has been found to reduce symptom flare-ups and greatly alleviate symptoms. Even if your days are hectic, try to build time each day to practice coping and stress reduction techniques of your choice. Some strategies include meditation, gentle yoga, and deep breathing, but it's best to choose one you enjoy. Similar to physical activity, it's helpful to start small and gradually work your way up to practicing for longer periods of time. You could reach out to your campus health promotion office for support and resources regarding stress management.
- **Catch those ZZZs.** Since symptoms of fibromyalgia take a physical and mental toll on your body, it's crucial that your body gets a sufficient night's sleep to recharge and avoid the many downsides of sleep deprivation, including a weakened immune system and cognitive problems — which may further wear you down. You might find that practicing healthy sleep habits help you get a full night's rest, such as waking up and going to sleep around the same time every day, sleeping in a cool and dark room, and limiting naps during the day.
- **Desertion of overexertion.** On days when you're feeling well and have lots of energy, it's often tempting to try to do more than you usually do — whether it's work, running errands, or even participating in social activities with your friends. But keep in mind that overexertion may lead you to become even more tired or exacerbate your symptoms later. Keeping your activity level consistent from day to day may help keep your fibromyalgia flare-ups at bay.
- **Utilize social support.** Leaning on friends and loved ones is often helpful when dealing with any personal issue. You might find it cathartic to express your emotions and let others know how you feel, both physically and mentally. Additionally, spending time with friends may also provide stress relief, helping to distract from the symptoms you're currently experiencing.
- **Try something different.** Beyond prescription and over-the-counter medications, there are alternate therapies that have been found to alleviate some symptoms of fibromyalgia — some of which may be covered by your insurance. Physical therapy, tai chi and [yoga](#) ^[3] have been helpful in managing pain, stiffness, troubles with sleep, and depression. Other options include chiropractic medicine, osteopathic medicine, and even [cognitive behavioral therapy \(CBT\)](#) ^[4], which is a form of psychotherapy used to improve coping mechanisms for pain and depression. Check with your school – some of these alternatives may be available to students at little to no cost. Don't be shy to test the waters — you might find something that works well for you!
- **Talk with someone who gets it.** It's natural to sometimes feel isolated from, misunderstood by, or frustrated with people in your life who don't have fibromyalgia and can't relate to what you're going through. To get through those times, and learn to “deal” with your illness, you might find it helpful to join a support group of people who have shared similar experiences or can offer advice and validation. One such resource is the [National Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain Association](#) ^[5], which has support groups all across the United States.

All of these tips aside, it's crucial that you afford yourself ample time to physically, mentally, and emotionally take care of yourself. While some care strategies may be costly, others can be low to no cost. Additionally, time is something of value that you can choose to spend on self-care. It's okay to feel drained at times or need to take a 'breather'; just do (or don't do) whatever you feel you can handle. With time, you may find more effective strategies to cope with this condition.

Take care,

Alice!

Category:

[General Health](#) [6]

[Aches, Pains & Other Ailments](#) [7]

[Chronic Conditions](#) [8]

Related questions

[Arthritis?](#) [9]

[Inexpensive yoga classes?](#) [10]

[Pleurisy](#) [11]

Resources

[Medical Services \(Morningside\)](#) [12]

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\) \(Morningside\)](#) [13]

[Alice! Health Promotion \(Morningside\)](#) [14]

[Medical Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [15]

[Mental Health Services \(CUIMC\)](#) [16]

[Center for Student Wellness \(CUIMC\)](#) [17]

Published date:

Apr 10, 2009

Last reviewed on:

Dec 15, 2017

Footer menu

- ▼ Contact Alice!
 - Content Use
 - Media Inquiries
 - Comments & Corrections
- ▼ Syndication & Licensing
 - Licensing Q&As
 - Get Alice! on Your Website
 - Full Site Syndication
 - Link to Go Ask Alice!

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/fibromyalgia-fixes-0>

Links

- [1] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/fibromyalgia-fixes-0>
- [2] <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/what-fibromyalgia-0>
- [3] <http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/health-benefits-yoga-0>
- [4] <https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/cognitive-behavioral-therapy/home/ovc-20186868>
- [5] <https://fibroandpain.org/support-groups>
- [6] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/general-health>
- [7] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/aches-pains-other-ailments>
- [8] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/category/chronic-conditions>
- [9] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/arthritis-1>
- [10] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/inexpensive-yoga-classes>
- [11] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/pleurisy-0>
- [12] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-morningside>
- [13] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/counseling-and-psychological-services-cps-morningside>
- [14] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/alice-health-promotion-morningside>
- [15] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/medical-services-cuimc>
- [16] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/mental-health-services-cuimc>
- [17] <https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/resource/center-student-wellness-cuimc>