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Finding Relief from Fibromyalgia

By AMANDA WILLIS

A new syndrome has been making headlines in recent years: fibromyalgia (FM), a complex chronic pain condition that affects people physically, mentally and socially.

Nena Dockery, technical services manager of Membrell, Carthage, MO explains, "FM is a painful and frustrating syndrome characterized by pain, fatigue and sleep disruption. The potential causes, manifestations and remedies are as diverse and as elusive as the condition itself."

There is no cure for FM and over-the-counter pain killers can only dull the pain. However, natural remedies may have some benefits for improved function and pain.

CoQ10. There may be a link between taking cholesterol-lowering medication and FM. Such drugs may deprive the body of CoQ10, which is found in our cells and is used to produce the energy needed to support cell regrowth and maintenance.

Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., blogged in *Psychology Today*, "These medications are used long term to treat high cholesterol. But this may starve the body of CoQ10 and pregnenolone and can, therefore, flare chronic fatigue syndrome/FMS."

Teitelbaum adds FM patients can have their pregnenolone and cholesterol levels tested. "If either is low or low normal, add CoQ10 and pregnenolone supplementation to your diet," he states. "Also add an omega-3 fish oil to help give your cell walls what they need while your body is blocking cholesterol production."

Many physicians agree that CoQ10 can benefit FM patients, but cannot cure it.

"There have been some positive preliminary results observed after supplementation with CoQ10, and an indication that there might be a link between the disorder and vitamin D status," Dockery says.

Vitamin D. Many FM patients have low levels, and some studies indicate that a higher intake of vitamin D can decrease FM symptoms. According to the Vitamin D Council, "Vitamin D may reduce the risk or symptoms of FM by lowering inflammation. Vitamin D reduces cytokine production. This protein causes inflammation. However, one study found that FM pain was not directly affected by these compounds."

Malic acid and magnesium. Magnesium is one of the most important elements our bodies need. Among many jobs, it helps with fatigue, a problem for many FM patients.

"The over-production of adrenaline due to stress leads to magnesium deficiency and therefore puts a strain on the magnesium dependent energy system of the body, causing energy depletions that leads to fatigue," Carolyn Dean, M.D., N.D., author of *The Magnesium Miracle*, explains. "Fatigue is often reduced with magnesium supplementation. Of the enzyme systems that require magnesium, the most important ones are responsible for energy production and storage."

Meanwhile, Dallas L. Cloutre, Ph.D., R&D consultant to Jarrow Formulas, Inc., explains, "FM is poorly understood and its treatment highly controversial. One argument is that local hypoxia leads to muscle pain. Malic acid supplements appear to give some relief."

Malic acid is found in food and helps produce energy in the body. It can also remove aluminum from the body. Aluminum toxicity is thought to be one contributor of FM symptoms.

Magnesium and malic acid are important for the body to create energy and helpful for FM patients. Dean explains, "In the case of FM, low magnesium keeps muscles in the state of spasm, so supplementation can aid in relieving the symptom."

Dean continues by looking at a study by Guy D. Abraham, M.D., who generated positive results in the reversal of FM with magnesium and malic acid supplementation. FM patients who took magnesium (300-600 mg) and malic acid (1,200-2,400 g) experienced pain relief in 48 hours.

Other remedies. Topical products may also help FM patients with the pain. Lou Paradise, president and chief of research at Topical BioMedics, Rhinebeck, NY speaks of his firm's cream: "The applications are on the tender points' at the front and back of the neck, trapeze muscle on the shoulders, the ribs, front chest, the shoulder blades, the upper outer area of hips and buttocks and around the knees. Women have reported to us that by using Topricin regularly they feel better and healthier, and are staying more active."



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