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## How to Ease Fibromyalgia Pain When Traveling

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Is fibromyalgia turning you from a globetrotter into a reluctant homebody? Having this disorder doesn't mean you're forced to give up vacations and weekend getaways. Packing right, making time to relax and listening to your body will help you limit fibromyalgia pain and put you on the road to a fabulous, flare-free trip. Read on for experts' best advice...



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Before being diagnosed with fibromyalgia, Cynthia Toussaint traveled the world by plane, train and automobile to feed her wanderlust.

"It was something I'd loved since I was a child," she says.

But when she developed symptoms of fibromyalgia more than two decades ago, travel became almost unbearable.

"Because of my fibromyalgia, travel represented pain, stress, fear, exhaustion and dread," Toussaint recalls. She stopped all unnecessary travel and avoided vacations and weekend getaways for nearly a decade.

"I truly believed I'd never be able to travel again," she says.



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Today, with a doctor's guidance and some modifications to her travel routine, Toussaint is back on the move.

"There are many ways women with fibromyalgia pain can stay comfortable – or at least minimize symptoms – when they travel," says Howard Schubiner, M.D., a fibromyalgia researcher at Providence Hospital and clinical professor at Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, Mich.

Here are 11 tips to help you beat fibromyalgia fatigue, pain and stress when you're traveling.

#### 1. Chill out.

Relaxation techniques can minimize fibromyalgia pain, Schubiner says.

"Stress triggers symptoms," he explains. "It wears you out physically, adds to your fatigue and makes you tense, which aggravates already aching body parts."

Create a playlist of relaxing music to listen to in the car, plane or train. That keeps your mind from thinking about your fibromyalgia symptoms and worrying they might flare up, Schubiner says.

Focus on the music and let it soothe your mind.

"If you relax, you may be able to reduce some of the inflammation that causes pain," he says.

#### 2. Dress the part.

Pack comfortable outfits to wear during your trip, says Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., best-selling author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* (Avery Penguin). That means workout clothes or anything else that's cozy and soft.

Stay away from tight or constricting clothes and anything with zippers or buttons that press against your skin when sitting for several hours.

What about dinners out or special occasions?

"It's fine to bring a few things that might not be fibromyalgia-friendly for those times when you're feeling great," Teitelbaum says.

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### 3. Stay warm.

The temperature on planes and trains can drop unexpectedly.

Feeling cold leads to shivering, which can exacerbate fibromyalgia pain.

To stay comfortable, pack a small, lightweight blanket or expandable scarf. And wear layers to help you adjust to temperature changes.

Don't forget a pair of travel slippers.

"You can slip off your shoes to be comfortable, [and] your feet will stay warm," Teitelbaum says.

### 4. Travel light.

Bring clothes that match so you can lug around less, says professional organizer Lea Schneider, owner of Organize Right Now, LLC, and author of *Growing Up Organized: A Mom-to-Mom Guide* (CreateSpace).

And shed excess weight from your bags using Schneider's top tips:

- \* Transfer products into smaller containers.
- \* Buy suitcases with wheels and padded handles that collapse for easy storage.
- \* Replace your purse with a fanny pack, which is smaller so it forces you to carry around less stuff.

"Whenever possible, check your bags instead of carrying them on a plane," Teitelbaum adds. You'll have more room for your feet below the seat in front of you and won't have to lift your luggage to put it up in an overhead bin.

### 5. Sleep well.

Getting enough rest is crucial to managing symptoms. "Lack of sleep increases fibromyalgia fatigue," Teitelbaum says. And that will make it harder to enjoy your vacation.

Plan ahead by finding out what kind of bed you'll be sleeping in.

If you're staying with friends or family, don't be shy about asking for the most comfortable bed available, Schubiner says.

If you're staying in a hotel or taking a cruise, consider spending more on a room with a high-quality bed. (Some hotels tout rooms with "heavenly beds.")

"Those can be more soothing to sore joints than an economy mattress," Schubiner says.

Also, packing your favorite pillow can be the key to a good night's sleep. It reduces your chances of waking up with an aching neck. And it "relieves the stress of wondering if you'll be able to sleep," Schubiner says.

When Toussaint travels now, she brings a small travel pillow in the car and on planes. It helps her catch a cat nap and arrive at her destination feeling refreshed.

#### 6. Keep moving.

Staying physically active will help you manage fibromyalgia pain and prevent stiffness, Teitelbaum says. But it can be hard to maintain an exercise routine when you're traveling.

Look for a hotel with a complimentary workout facility and pool so you can exercise without cost or much effort.

And pack a yoga mat to do some relaxation and stretching poses in your room. It's a simple way to stay active and ease symptoms that may flare up on the road, adds Teitelbaum.

(For step-by-step instructions on 5 easy exercises designed for people with fibromyalgia, read [Need Fibromyalgia Pain Relief? Try Yoga.](#))

#### 7. Listen to your body.

Even if the kids are begging to go on one more ride or your friends are dying to hit one more boutique, pay attention to your body's signals.

"You know when you've had enough and need to take a break," Schubiner says. "When you feel too tired or sore to continue on, stop."

#### 8. Schedule downtime.

Include frequent rest periods in your vacation schedule to keep fibromyalgia fatigue at bay.

Before your trip, tell the people you're traveling with about your planned rest breaks. Let them know you may not be up to doing everything you have planned.

"If you tell your travel mates what you'll need to manage stress and fatigue, you can take care of yourself without worrying that you're a burden," says Tina Tessina, Ph.D., a psychotherapist in Los Angeles.

You can also modify plans to stay involved, says Tessina. "You'll still feel like a part of the action if you sit on a nearby bench and watch the kids on a ride."

#### 9. Pack smart snacks.

Snacking on protein-packed foods – a handful of nuts, a cup of yogurt, or half a peanut-butter sandwich on whole-grain bread – will rev you up and help you get through a long day of travel.

Protein is important to every cell in the body.

"Your body uses protein to build and repair tissue. It's also one of the biggest sources of energy in your body," says Evangeline Lausier, M.D., assistant clinical professor in medicine and director of clinical service at Duke Integrative Medicine in Durham, N.C.

Protein-rich snacks are a much better choice than sugary foods, which cause drastic spikes and then dips in your blood sugar that contribute to fibromyalgia fatigue. "Those dips can leave you feeling extra sluggish," Lausier says.

10. Break up drive time.

When traveling by car, schedule a stop every 1-2 hours to stretch stiff muscles and joints.

"Getting out of the car for as little as five minutes promotes proper circulation to your joints and limbs to reduce stiffness," Schubiner says.

Here are more tips for warding off fibromyalgia pain when you're in the car:

- \* Share driving responsibilities to combat muscle fatigue.
- \* Install wide-angle side and rear-view mirrors to avoid twisting around to see behind you.
- \* Use a padded steering-wheel cover to soothe tired hands and aching wrists.
- \* Charge your GPS for times when fibro fog is setting in and it's hard to navigate unfamiliar roads.

**Source: Lifescript**

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