5 Ways to Manage Fibromyalgia Muscle Stiffness

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Coping With Fibromyalgia Muscle Stiffness

Experiencing fibromyalgia muscle stiffness is a very common symptom for patients. Many of us wake up feeling stiff and sore, so learning to relax our muscles and ease that tension should be a very important part of our coping strategy.

As with most things related to fibromyalgia, it is all about finding what works for you — isn't that so frustrating? No quick fix and no one size fits all, but once you have found a way to fight the tension, you will notice the benefits immediately.

As muscle tightness eases, you become more flexible and therefore more capable of moving around. Improved movement helps us to feel mentally stronger so that even if the physical pain hasn't eased, we feel more capable of coping with it.

What Causes Fibromyalgia Muscle Stiffness?

There are many possible causes of fibromyalgia muscle stiffness. Muscle stiffness, tension, or tightness may happen when an individual is not physically active enough, performing certain exercises or physically demanding labor, straining the muscle, muscle inflammation, side effect of a medication or medications and widespread pain.

While this is just a small list of possible causes, it is best to talk to your doctor if your fibromyalgia muscle pain and stiffness are persistent.

5 Ways to Cope With Fibromyalgia Muscle Stiffness

Here are the top five ways I ease fibromyalgia muscle stiffness, tightness and tension.

1. Yoga

I tried yoga for the first time a few weeks ago. I'd been wary because it often relies on holding uncomfortable poses for long periods of time, something I knew I would struggle with — and probably later regret.

I started a one-on-one course with a woman who lived locally; I told her about my condition and she explained she had worked with many fibromyalgia patients who had felt benefits from yoga.

It's important to find someone who knows about fibromyalgia and really gets it so you can get the most out of your teacher. Last week she said something that really caught my attention. She said, "The body wants to rest, it knows how to rest, but you're the one that keeps getting in the way." So true.

As I lay on the floor with my knees bent and my palms facing up, I tried to think of the last time I lay down and did

nothing. The only time I ever lie down is in bed, and even then I don't lie flat. I lie on my side or on my stomach — often with a hot water bottle balanced on my lower back. It doesn't relax my body in the way this did.

The gentle movements and opportunities to rest eased my muscle tension, and I felt like I had found a new level of relaxation. Unfortunately, I haven't sustained it. My struggle with yoga is a mental struggle; I feel like I want to achieve something and in yoga, those achievements take too long to materialize. I guess I'm the one who doesn't get it.

2. Pilates

Pilates is the only exercise I've ever maintained and I think that is because I feel like I'm doing something. As well as relaxing and stretching my muscles, I'm also building my core strength — something many fibromyalgia patients lose over the years.

How many of you reading this can sit up straight, spread your weight evenly, hold your posture and sustain that position throughout the day? I know I can't. My back and neck take the weight while my core muscles do nothing, so I guess it is no wonder I'm in pain.

Finding a good Pilates teacher is just as important as finding a good yoga teacher. But as if that wasn't hard enough, you also have to find the right type of yoga or Pilates. Is it just me, or does the whole thing become simply baffling?

After many hours online and two pretty bad experiences, I eventually found a class that meets my needs. My advice is:

- Work out what your needs are.
- Work out what you can afford.
- Decide how far you are willing to travel.
- Pick up the phone.

It's really important to talk to your teacher beforehand to make sure you have a good relationship with them and ensure that they understand your needs.

3. Massage

Massage is a great way to ease muscle tension without any effort whatsoever. I recently discovered an excellent aromatherapy massage therapist and she has changed my life! Taking time out to relax my body and mind, in a candle-lit room with soft music in the background is exactly what I need.

I'm trying to get a massage every Sunday afternoon as a way of starting the week fresh. It can get expensive, but I figure a massage is a better way of spending my money than buying yet another top I do not need.

4. Hot Water

Heat always has been and always will be my go-to pain relief. When your muscles are tight, there is nothing better than a hot bath with bubbles and candles to, once again, relax your body and your mind.

When we are stressed and emotional, we tense our muscles involuntarily and get caught in a vicious cycle. A hot bath eases muscle tension in moments — the difficulty is sustaining it when you get out!

5. Walking

Don't you hate being told to exercise when all you want to do is go to bed? But it is so true — get up and walk around as much as you can. I have genuine fears that my muscles will start to seize up over time, so I look to move and stretch as much as possible during the working day.

A gentle stroll after work for 10 minutes can help to ease the tension. Walking keeps your muscles in use and keeps you fitter and healthier. In fact, there is a small possibility I’m using fibromyalgia as part of my argument to get a little dog!