8 Supplements to Take to Ease Fibromyalgia Symptoms

by STARLA RICH

Supplements for Fibromyalgia

Several years ago, I bought a home and was packing up my things to move. When I did, I came across something both shocking and sobering. For some reason, I had been putting all of my empty medicine bottles in gallon Ziploc bags and storing them away, as I had not taken the time to break them down and place them in the trash on a regular basis. I'm embarrassed to tell you just how many bags of empty bottles I found! What I do want to tell you is the surprising number of various types of prescriptions those bottles represented.

I had been living in that location for six years, and to look back on the many prescriptions my doctors had given me was alarming! Sadly, none of them had really provided relief or even proper maintenance for my fibro symptoms for any sustainable amount of time. Each and every one of them became less and less effective within a period of about three months.

Aside from the pharmaceuticals, I had also tried various herbs and supplements over the years. Managing the symptoms of fibromyalgia was no easy task, but the trial and error of these experiments had actually given me insight to some key elements my body needed and had proven to be beneficial towards better maintenance of my fibromyalgia symptoms.

Different 'Wiring'

There is no one right or wrong prescription for those dealing with fibromyalgia, as our bodies react differently. Equally, there is no general guarantee that certain supplements will be effective across the board for those of us dealing with fibromyalgia.

The wiring for a person who has been diagnosed with fibromyalgia is different from healthy individuals, as well as individuals dealing with chronic pain or fatigue from other health conditions.

Doctors and researchers still are not able to fully explain why, but they have come to a greater understanding over the years: fibromyalgia seems to stem from muscular issues, as well as neurological issues.

Research shows our wiring is faulty in some way, causing us to experience pain differently, as well as prohibiting proper absorption and distribution of nutrition and vitamins in our bodies. For this reason, it requires patience and a level of experimentation with various supplements to see what does and does not work.

What Are Some of the Best Supplements for Fibromyalgia?

If you want to take a natural approach to treat fibromyalgia, it is important to learn as much as you can about the therapies you consider. Below are some of the more standard supplements being used to treat the symptoms of fibromyalgia:

1. 5-HTP (5-Hydroxytryptophan)

5-HTP is a building block of serotonin, a powerful brain chemical thought to play a significant role in fibromyalgia pain. Serotonin levels are also associated with depression and sleep.

For those with fibromyalgia, 5-HTP may help increase deep sleep and reduce pain. In one study published in the Alternative Medicine Review, researchers reported supplementation with 5-HTP may improve symptoms of depression, anxiety, insomnia and fibromyalgia pain. However, there are some contradictory studies that show no benefit with 5-HTP.

Make sure to use organic and pure forms of this product. I have personally used 5-HTP and found it to be effective in helping me reach that deep level of sleep that aids in serotonin production.

2. Melatonin

Melatonin is a natural hormone available as an over-the-counter supplement. It is sometimes used to induce drowsiness and improve sleep patterns.

Some preliminary findings show melatonin may be effective in treating fibromyalgia pain. Most patients with fibromyalgia have sleep problems and fatigue, and it is thought that melatonin may help relieve these symptoms.

Melatonin is generally regarded as safe with few or no side effects. Due to the risk of daytime sleepiness though, anyone taking melatonin should use caution when driving.

3. SAMe (S-adenosylmethionine)

The body manufactures SAMe (S-adenosylmethionine) from the amino acid methionine and from adenosine triphosphate (ATP), an energy-producing compound found in all cells.

In one study, patients who took SAMe for fibromyalgia daily for six weeks reported less stiffness and fewer muscle aches.

4. L-carnitine

The studies are limited, but it is thought that L-carnitine may give some pain relief and treat other symptoms in people with fibromyalgia.

5. Probiotics

Probiotics are dietary supplements that contain potentially beneficial bacteria or yeasts. They may assist with the breakdown and proper absorption of food and help improve digestive problems, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) — a common symptom of fibromyalgia. Side effects of taking probiotics are usually mild and include gas or bloating.

6. Vitamin D

This vitamin is not just for the bones — some researchers have attributed fibromyalgia, as well as generalized aches and pains not associated with fibromyalgia, to a vitamin D deficiency.

An Irish study found a strong correlation between low vitamin D levels and higher rates and longer duration of generalized bone and/or muscle aches and pains, as well as with fibromyalgia-related anxiety and depression.

7. Magnesium

Researchers believe a deficiency in magnesium (found in many green vegetables, beans and whole grains) can

contribute to the muscle pain associated with fibromyalgia.

You can take a magnesium supplement to help ensure you are getting the recommended daily value (310 milligrams for women, 400 milligrams for men).

8. Vitamin B-12

This vitamin plays a significant role in the formation of red blood cells, in the health of your central nervous system and it aids in the function of your metabolism. It's water-soluble, meaning your body does not store it in reserves, so you need to take it in regularly.

Since the problem with our vitamin levels lies in malabsorption, the vitamin in pill form is often not adequate enough to supply the necessary levels. For this reason, many doctors prescribe the vitamin as an injection.

My Experience

The use of magnesium, B12, 5-HTP and more recently a supplement called Metanx, has produced an improvement for me during times of chronic fatigue, pain, IBS and other various symptoms of fibromyalgia.

If traditional medications have proven to be ineffective for you over time, I encourage you to talk to your doctor about using supplements for fibromyalgia. You never know what inexpensive solution is waiting out there to improve your quality of life.