Oxygen Therapy Can ‘Reverse’ Fibromyalgia, Study Claims

by AMANDA BEST

Findings Promising, But More Research Needed

Hyperbaric oxygen therapy can help to ease fibromyalgia pain and may even be able to reverse the condition, according to a new study out of Israel.

The study, conducted by researchers from Tel-Aviv University, involved a clinical trial of 60 women with fibromyalgia diagnoses.

Each week for two months the women received five 90-minute sessions in a hyperbaric oxygen chamber, where they breathed in pure oxygen at twice the atmospheric pressure we typically experience. This allows the lungs to take in much more oxygen.

Forty-eight of the women completed the full two months, receiving 40 treatments in total, and 70 percent had “significant changes in brain activity and symptoms.”

Many were able to reduce the amount of medication they were on, and some went off medications altogether.

“The intake of the drugs eased the pain but did not reverse the condition. But hyperbaric oxygen treatments did reverse the condition,” said researcher Dr. Shai Efrati in a statement.

Dr. Efrati went on to say that the oxygen therapy was “designed to address the actual cause of fibromyalgia — the brain pathology responsible for the syndrome.”

In the United States the FDA has approved use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy to treat decompression sickness — associated with scuba diving — as well as 13 other conditions, including some serious infections and wounds that won’t heal.

For people with conditions not on that list, like fibromyalgia, the expensive treatments are unlikely to be covered by insurance.

Complications of the therapy are rare, but include temporary nearsightedness, middle ear injuries, lung collapse and seizures.

Research into hyperbaric oxygen therapy as a treatment for fibromyalgia and other conditions affecting the brain is ongoing.

If you are considering trying hyperbaric oxygen therapy, be sure to discuss it with your doctor.