4 Ways to Help Relieve Fibro-Bloating

by PUJA RIOS

Fibromyalgia and Bloating

Fibromyalgia has 60-plus symptoms, everything from joint, nerve, and muscle pain, to constant fatigue, sensory overload, and never-ending discomfort. As mysterious as this illness is, I thought I had done enough research to understand what my body would experience because of it.

To my dismay, one morning, I awoke with what felt like a basketball protruding out of my stomach. I bolted to my bathroom mirror to assess the situation.

I looked six months pregnant! But I'm not pregnant, so what's going on here? As my eyes floated upward, I caught the face of a stranger in the bathroom with me. She was the same height as me, same hair color and style, but with a super-chubby face-oh my god–MY FACE!

I raised my hands to my bulging cheeks in horror and saw the last straw (or the last sausages, really). My fingers had blown up so big that my finger with my wedding ring on turned white from poor circulation.

I stood there in front of the mirror feeling terrified, shocked entirely–like being sucker-punched. What was happening to me?!

I considered what I'd eaten in the last 24 hours and couldn't remember anything out of the norm. I knew that some of my medications (Lyrica) cause weight gain, but this huge ball in my belly was confounding.

With the help of Google, I came across a side effect of fibromyalgia that previously evaded me. Bloating! Well, that's just GREAT. Will the side effects of Fibro ever end? It’s bad enough that we are in pain every waking (and sleeping) moment.

Getting dressed is already agonizing, but fitting into clothes for my "other self" whose eight pounds lighter is just ridiculous. Not to mention the emotional damage this inspired--just as I thought I had a handle on this condition, I'm clotheslined by bloating.

What Is Bloating?

Bloating is a build-up of gas in the stomach and intestines.

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, here are a few theories on bloating/abdominal distension:

1. Increased luminal contents (gas, stools, liquid or fat)
2. Impaired abdominal emptying (e.g., defective propulsion, obstructed evacuation)
3. Altered intra-abdominal volume displacement (abdomino-phrenic theory)

4. Increased perception of intestinal stimuli (sensory dysfunction or psychological factors)

After reading the causes of bloating, I finally understood why this was happening. Fibro bodies are always inflamed. Our bodies work overtime because of the inflammation. So it should be no surprise that my Buddha-belly protrudes quite often.

How to Reduce Bloating

There's no quick fix for bloating, but there are some choices we can make to help fight it. Here are my coping mechanisms and tips to reduce bloat.

Work with Two Different Size Wardrobes

I can go to bed as a size 6 and wake up as a size 8. I tried to make one size fit at all times, but that wasn't realistic. Surrendering to the fact that I needed to buy bigger clothes was depressing at first, but now I get dressed with more ease every day, no matter my bloat status, and life is that much more comfortable.

Drink 65 Ounces of Water a Day

I've never been a big water drinker, and I tend to prefer things with flavor like green tea and Diet Coke.

To motivate me to drink more water, I found two things helpful: buy a cute water bottle with ounces measured out, and add some flavor.

Lemon water is not only excellent for hydration, but it benefits skin quality, is a fabulous source of vitamin C, AND supports weight loss. Electrolytes is another way I look forward to drinking water. They taste yummy, help with hydration and blood pressure, and prevent muscle cramps.

Drinking water doesn't sound so dull anymore, does it?

Eat Vegan (Most of the Time)

The most beneficial change I've made since my Fibro diagnosis is, without question, going vegan. When I eat this way, my body performs at an entirely different level: my energy is up, I move faster, my mind is sharper, my inflammation diminishes, and my self-esteem gets a considerable boost. But like I mentioned, I'm not 100 percent vegan. 80/20 is my goal, and when I'm disciplined, I'm at my best.

Reduce Sugar Intake

Talk about a sore subject. Sugar has brought me much happiness in the dark world of Fibro. It's been by my side when I'm hurting most--mid-flare, on the floor, waiting for it to all end.

My sweet little M&M's, my darling Gummy Bears, why can't you be good for me? Unfortunately, sugar promotes inflammation, as well as obesity, heart disease and much, much more, so it's "ttyl" to my sugary pals.

The Takeaway

Undoubtedly, putting any of these suggestions into action will improve your ability to cope with Fibro bloat. I have the most success when I'm easy on myself and make small changes, a little at a time.

We don't have to be 100 percent perfect to find relief, but we do have to be mindful and accountable. My advice: put up a Post-it to remind you of your new goals, reward yourself often, and get excited about your results.