How to Survive the Summer With Fibromyalgia

by PUJA RIOS

Fibromyalgia and Summer

The sun is shining bright, and flowers are in full bloom, boats filled with tourists are taking in the sights of Chicago from Lake Michigan, summer is officially here! For many, this is their favorite time of year, for me, it's hard to even look out the window to witness all the sunshiny fun. Jealous much? Totally.

Fibromyalgia is no cake walk at any point, but when the weather heats up, symptoms are especially difficult to manage. Here are some tips on how to stay cool (but not too cool) and comfortable while having a bit of fun this summer.

How to Beat the Summer Heat With Fibromyalgia

The hot sun introduces problems to us sensitive types and can really mess with our bodies. I experience heat rash, fainting, nausea, and swollen hands, joints, face, and feet. To fend off these symptoms, here's what I find helps:

1. Mini USB cellphone fans. Oh my goodness, these are lifesavers! I bought a 3-pack (for $10) and I keep one in my office, one in my purse and one at home. (I'd also recommend a portable phone charger so you'll never be without your little wind-maker.)
2. Money doesn't grow on trees, I know, but for me, straight AC is too cold, and the outside air is sizzling. I have to open a few windows and run the air conditioning at the same time, and balance is restored!
3. Messy buns and top-knots are summer saviors! Keeping my hair up keeps me a few precious degrees cooler and shows off my cute cheekbones. Browse Pinterest for fun, new ways to do your do.
4. Go ahead, throw some shade. I always carry a floppy hat or a light colored umbrella to protect my delicate skin. Hat tip: a straw hat will keep you coolest (and you will look divine).
5. Relish your portable hydration station. Invest in a temperature regulating water bottle and keep cold water by your side all day long. I'm a Yeti girl-I'm pretty sure my drink could stay cold until next summer.
6. Let’s get some shoes. It's always been hard to find comfortable sandals and gym shoes are too hot for summer. Birkenstocks are the comfiest way to dress my feet in the heat, and they have tons of new, cute styles. My fave right now is shimmering gold. LOVE!
7. Embrace the Maxi skirt. Dress in loose-fitting clothing and avoid dark colors. Don't worry friends; we can go back to dressing in all black in the fall.
8. Snack on smoothies. What's more refreshing than a fruity ice potion?? Blueberry, banana, pineapple, peanut butter and why not a bit of dark chocolate. To fight against joint pain and inflammation, add a teaspoon of turmeric and a crack of black pepper. Want bonus points? Add chia and ground flaxseeds. You won't taste anything but delicious.
9. Eat light and eat right. Summer salads are just scrumptious, and lucky for us, no one has OD'd on them. Have a veggie-forward few months and look your best and feel light and fresh.

What to Avoid During the Summer With Fibromyalgia

- **Boat rides.** No speedboat rides anyway. Choppy waters do NOT mix well with my fragile body. It would take me a week to recover, and I've got people to see.
- **Carnivals.** No. No. No. The smells alone would knock me off my feet, not to mention the circus music and screaming children everywhere. Can someone bring a funnel cake to my apartment, please?
- **Too much BBQ.** I don't make the rules, but if I did, I would've made BBQ a superfood. It's so yummy, but I feel like garbage and turn into a slug when I over-indulge.

Chill Ways to Chill With Fibromyalgia

- **Host or join a book club.** Need to feel inspired? Love true crime? Maybe a romance novel? Whatever mood you're in, there's a great book waiting to take you away!
- **Host your friends for a night.** Graze, gossip, catch-up, and play Catch Phrase and let your hair down (unless you're still hot). Play some old school tunes and remember simpler times.
- **See a musical.** If you haven't seen Hamilton yet, what are you doing? Treat yo self! The theater is definitely good for the soul, and I walk out a better person every time.
- **Go to the Omnimax.** Expand your screen and your mind. I love escaping to a world I'll probably never visit. The shows are so intense and mind-blowing! Just dress comfy, those theaters can be chilly.

We work with so many limitations due to our conditions, but we can't let that get us down or convince us to stop having fun. We need joy in our lives!

No matter what you find yourself doing to beat the heat, the most important thing we can control is the company we keep. Surround yourself with kind, caring, hilarious people and you'll never feel limited.

I hope this list contributes to the quality of your summer, make it epic!