7 Common Fibromyalgia Pressure Points to Be Aware Of

by PUJA RIOS

Fibromyalgia Pressure Points

Living with fibromyalgia is grueling. You cannot see the illness, and even though it has over 60 troublesome symptoms, many people do not even believe the condition is real. Oh yeah, and there is no cure. For years, there was not even a test to diagnose the disease. One of the first examinations I learned about to diagnose fibromyalgia was the trigger point test.

I remember that doctor appointment distinctly. The doctor pushed on 18 points, from my legs up to my neck and asked, “Does this hurt? How about here?” Each time I winced in excruciating pain. Yes! All of them hurt, a lot!

Rheumatologists have found that feeling pain in at least 11 of the 18 trigger pressure points could be cause for a fibromyalgia diagnosis. Below I share my experience with each point and what I do to manage the agony, starting from the bottom, up.

Where Are the Pressure Points for Fibromyalgia?

1. Knees

It's no surprise that our joints are affected by fibromyalgia, as inflammation is enemy number one with this condition. My knees are where I (and many others) experience the most frequent pain; they feel like they are literally on fire at all times. The trigger point test says they should be “tender to touch" but for me, that is a gross understatement.

2. Lower Back and Buttocks

These two points are extremely painful and sensitive, even from a gentle spraying in the shower. To survive the day, I rely on a comfy office chair with a back support cushion.

3. Hips

Our hips take a severe beating every day, and inflammation is unavoidable. I imagine mine give me similar problems to a 90-year-old's. Two years into my diagnosis, the pain became so intense that I came to rely on a cane and wheelchair to get around. Luckily, this was temporary. To combat the chronic discomfort, I sleep on a Tempur-Pedic mattress.

4. Upper Back

You'll find these points where your shoulder blades connect to your muscles and tendons. I'm cautious to keep weight off of this area: no jewelry, cotton clothing only and lightweight coats, even in the winter.

5. Front and Back of the Neck

The latter is my most painful trigger point. Though I usually steer clear of massages (because I am too sensitive), my husband often has to use all of his strength to release the pressure here, daily.

6. Chest

Many muscles and tendons surround our vital organs here. Be advised: pain in this region has mimicked a heart attack due to swelling of these muscles, making it impossible for me to breathe.

7. Elbows

Again, where you find joint and muscle tendons meeting, you may experience swelling and severe pain. Sporadically, when going to reach for something, say, to pet my dog JZ goodbye, my arm will lock up without warning. Chalk up one more hurdle to hop when I am finally heading out the door.

It's true that these seven points are the same for all of us, but that is where the shared experience ends. Every fibro warrior suffers a different fate. Some cases are mild and easy to manage, while others turn everything in your life upside down.

What to Avoid to Prevent Your Tender Points From Becoming More Sensitive

Over the years, I have recognized elements and conditions that cause my trigger points to become even more sensitive. Avoid getting blindsided by learning some common triggers and helpful tips.

What Triggers Fibromyalgia Flares?

- **Sugar:** I'm in a constant battle with my sweet tooth. When I am in pain, sugar gives me the dopamine hit I need to get through! Is it worth it though? After that initial feel-good moment, those sweets send my body into a downward tailspin.
- **Temperature:** Temperatures lower than 65F or more than 80F take me out of the running for anything outdoors. Chicago summers are kind to me, but you can imagine how I feel about winters.
- **Rain:** I can feel bad weather coming a day away. My body stiffens like the Tin (Wo)man until the storms roll through.

How to Prevent Fibromyalgia Flare-Ups

- **Diet:** Try giving up meat (vegan is most effective), go gluten-free and only eat sugar twice a week. Your inflammation will significantly decrease!
- **Stretch:** 7 to 10 minutes every day, of slow and light movement. Don't overdo it.
- **Swim:** Legit and low impact. Warning: chlorine may irritate your skin.
- **Sleep:** Try your best to get 8 to 10 hours every night. Bonus points if you leave your phone outside of the bedroom.
- **Soak:** Draw an Epsom salt bath to soothe sore muscles (and your mind). If you can handle essential oils, relax deeper with drops of lavender, peppermint and ginger.
- **Acupuncture:** I wish I started acupuncture 15 years ago. Not only does it ease my body pain but it also improves anxiety levels, depression and fatigue.
- **Water:** Most importantly, drink at least 65 ounces of water a day. This is my non-negotiable task.

With fibromyalgia, it can feel like you are always playing defense, and it is exhausting. Rely on your support team for help when you can, online and off. We're all in this together!

Do your best to stay positive and treat yourself with plenty of breaks and downtime. Wishing you days of 75F and sunshine, just remember your shades.