# 6 Celebrities With Fibromyalgia You May Not Know About

by KATARINA ZULAK

## Celebrities With Fibromyalgia You Need to Know About

Some people have managed to make a name for themselves in Hollywood, the music industry, or big business in spite of their fibromyalgia. Take a look at these six celebrities with fibromyalgia who have been able to rise above the challenges of their fibromyalgia.

**Lady Gaga**

No celebrity has done more to raise awareness about fibromyalgia than Lady Gaga. She first opened up about living with chronic pain in her 2017 documentary *Gaga: Five Foot Two*.

Later that year, she tweeted about her fibromyalgia diagnosis, which caused a flurry of international headlines describing life with this illness. Gaga was forced to cancel 10 European shows because of her symptoms.

Most recently, she gave a *Vogue* interview for their October 2018 edition. Speaking about experiencing trauma and PTSD, Lady Gaga explained the connection between trauma and chronic pain: “I get so irritated with people who don't believe fibromyalgia is real. For me, and I think for many others, it’s really a cyclone of anxiety, depression, PTSD, trauma, and panic disorder, all of which sends the nervous system into overdrive, and then you have nerve pain as a result."

She describes the unpredictability associated with fibromyalgia symptoms. "Chronic pain is no joke," Gaga told *Vogue*. "And it’s every day waking up not knowing how you’re going to feel.”

After searching for an effective fibromyalgia treatment, which she depicts in her documentary, Lady Gaga since she has now found a great team of doctors who are helping her manage her condition.

**Sinead O'Connor**

Sinead O'Connor is an Irish singer-songwriter, who first became known in the late 1980s for her debut album *The Lion and the Cobra*. Her struggle with mental illness, which she has described as bipolar disorder, has played out on the public stage.

Sinead took a sabbatical in 2003 from making new music. In a 2005 interview, she explained that her decision had been made in part because of her overwhelming fibromyalgia symptoms.

“Fibromyalgia is not curable. But it’s manageable,” Sinéad told *Hotpress*. “I have a high pain threshold, so that helps – it’s the tiredness part that I have difficulty with. You get to know your patterns and limits, though, so you can work and plan around it. It is made worse, obviously, by stress. So you have to try to keep life quiet and peaceful. And you have to re-assess what you do – and maybe find another less stressful job, or rehabilitate your same job! Which is kind of what I am trying to do, given that I love singing and that it’s calming. So I want to do

that, but to stay out of the parts of it that cause me undue stress."

**Mary McDonough**

Mary McDonough is best known for playing Erin Walton in the *Homecoming* and the *Waltons*. She has also appeared on *Will and Grace*, the *West Wing*, the *New Adventures of Old Christine*, and has numerous other television credits.

After the Waltons ended, she experienced a severe allergic reaction after receiving silicone breast implantations. Following that, Mary's health gradually deteriorated, and she experienced constant flu-like symptoms.

She was eventually diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease that affects connective tissue. Over time, she was also diagnosed with fibromyalgia and Sjogren's syndrome. It's common for people with fibromyalgia to have other overlapping conditions, especially autoimmune and chronic pain conditions.

Initially, Mary struggled to get accurately diagnosed, "Of course, everyone kept saying, 'Well you're crazy. You're depressed. Go to therapy!' So it with 10 years of being diagnosed and finally I got to the point where I was in so much pain I couldn't even lift my daughter."

Now she is an advocate for body confidence, doing public speaking and leading workshops about helping women develop positive relationships with their bodies. Mary says that today, "My lupus is in remission, it's something that I deal with every day. I still have a lot of inflammation and that sort of thing, but… I'm healthier than I have been in a long time."

*Next page: three more celebrities with fibromyalgia you probably didn't know about.*

**Janeane Garofalo**

Janeane is a well-known actress and comedian. She has appeared in numerous movies, TV shows, and stand-up comedy shows. Her credits include the *Larry Sanders show*, *SNL*, *Seinfeld*, *The West Wing*, and the *Girlfriend's Guide to Divorce*.

Janeane is known for her stinging wit and self-deprecating comedy. She has mentioned living with depression and anxiety as well as fibromyalgia. She embodies the proverb that laughter is the best medicine.

For example, in one standup show, Janeane quipped that, after being prescribed an antidepressant to manage fibromyalgia, she realized "I had no idea I was chronically dissatisfied."

**Rosie Hamlin**

Rosie Hamlin was a singer-songwriter, who headlined the band *Rosie and the Originals*. Their song *Angel Baby* became a massive hit in 1960 when Rosie was only 16. She was the first Latino to be honored by the Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame.

Later in life, she focused on raising funds for programs supporting Latino causes and benefits for children. Rosie struggled with pacing to manage her fibromyalgia fatigue.

"I've always been extremely energetic and very, very busy. It's taken me a couple of years now to have to deal with fibromyalgia,  and have to re-think my life, re-organize and realize – just having to realize that I'm so limited now. I don't like it, but I have to deal with it."

She experienced back pain, cognitive issues, light, and sound sensitivity, burning sensations and other challenging fibromyalgia symptoms.

"I just couldn't get it into my head that you could hurt so badly in one area, and then three or four hours later hurt someplace else. That's what made me really think I was losing my mind."

Eventually, it became too difficult for Rosie to continue performing at concerts, which she relied financially on, causing her to have trouble affording her medical care. Rosie turned her creative energy to oil painting and gardening, to help manage some of the anxiety she experienced as a result of living with fibromyalgia.

Sadly, she passed away in 2017 at the age of 71.

**AJ Langer**

AJ Langer is best known for her role as Rayanne, best friend to Claire Danes' character in the 1990s show *My So-Called Life*. She developed fibromyalgia in her early teens, and the pain pushed her from sports into acting. At the time, AJ was a tomboy who played on an all-boys baseball team. At the age of 14, she started experiencing chronic pain.

Although AJ continued acting for the next six years in different roles, her symptoms continued to develop. She describes experiencing pain "Almost everywhere – my back, neck, hips and other body parts. It was often excruciating and debilitating, and made being a normal kid who participated in school sports – not to mention just walking – difficult."

Unfortunately, she experienced skepticism and disbelief from medical professionals as she searched for a diagnosis.

"At one visit, I heard a doctor tell my mother I was faking it. Even though I had so many classic fibromyalgia symptoms, no one ever mentioned or considered treating me for it."

Eventually, her symptoms became too severe to continue acting, and she was bedridden for a year.

AJ ultimately put together a new health team, including alternative practitioners like acupuncturists and massage therapists to treat her fibromyalgia. She learned everything she could about fibromyalgia and began paying attention to her body and pain triggers.

Meditation helps her cope with the mental aspect of living with pain. Learning from her mom who is also fibromyalgia suffer, AJ focuses on enjoying her life and moving forward.

AJ is now a modern-day Cinderella, who married an English Earl and has two children. She splits her time between the English countryside and LA, and helps to oversee renovations on her husband's family castle!