



TIPS

for Living With Fibromyalgia

As with most chronic conditions, the best way to deal with the illness is to work with it, not against it. Until there is a cure, finding ways to cope with fibromyalgia is the most productive approach. Here are some suggestions:

- ❑ **Pace Yourself.** Daily life can hold many stressors. Know your tolerance for activity, and try not to take on more than you can handle. Set short-term goals, and reassess your energy levels and stamina along the way. Also, when in a stressful situation, take a short break to relax and recharge.
- ❑ **Exercise.** Start small with incremental steps that you think you can handle. Increase your activity levels with simple things, such as walking, and then progress to gentle, low-impact exercises. Check with your health care provider before beginning any exercise program.
- ❑ **Eat Well.** A healthy and balanced diet can increase your energy levels, boost your immune system, and help ease some of your symptoms.
- ❑ **Look for Shortcuts, Aids, or Assistive Devices.** When possible, look for ways to make necessary tasks less fatiguing. Some examples are using a telephone headset for hands-free phone calls, using voice-activated software to cut down on typing, and using a cart to minimize lifting and carry items, etc.
- ❑ **Keep a Pain Diary.** Having a record of how you feel and the circumstances surrounding your feelings can be very helpful in planning future coping strategies. In whatever form makes sense to you (checklist, diary, chart), keep a daily record of how you feel, how much sleep you've gotten, your activity levels, weather, mood, exercise, and medications taken, etc.
- ❑ **Join a Support Group.** Learning all you can about your illness can help you control your symptoms rather than have your symptoms control you. Communicating with other fibromyalgia patients can help you learn new coping strategies, feel less alone and depressed, and gain motivation to remain in control of your illness.
- ❑ **Relax.** Know when you're pushing too hard. Listen to your body, and take a break when you reach your limits. After stressful events, try meditation, deep breathing exercises, light yoga, a hot bath, or some other form of rejuvenating relaxation.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.

