



Understanding and Treating FIBROMYALGIA SYNDROME (FMS) in pregnant women and newly moms!

Most women find their pregnancies to be very enjoyable, but pregnancy can definitely have its difficult times. Whether it is morning sickness, insomnia, or just plain old fatigue, being pregnant can really take it out of you. When you are pregnant and fighting an illness though, things can be even worse. Women with fibromyalgia, a chronic pain disorder, often wonder if they will be able to deal with the demands of a pregnancy.

• What is Fibromyalgia?

The most commonly accepted definition of FIBROMYALGIA is that the person affected needs to show a history of widespread pain (pain is considered widespread when all of the following are present: pain in the left side of the body, pain in the right side of the body, pain above the waist and pain below the waist).

In addition there should be pain in the spine or the neck or front of the chest, or thoracic spine or lower back and pain in 11 of 18 tender point sites (Trigger Points) on finger pressure.

• Basic Symptoms of Fibromyalgia in Pregnant women and newly moms:

- Multiple tender areas (muscle and joint pain) on the back of the neck, shoulders, sternum, lower back, hip, shin, elbows, knees.
 - Fatigue
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Body aches
 - Reduced exercise tolerance
 - Chronic facial muscle pain or aching
- Fibromyalgia often seem to begin after an infection or a severe shock (physical or emotional) and it is more frequent in women than in men with a ratio of 5 (Female) / 1 (Male).

- **Fibromyalgia and Pregnancy: IMPORTANT!!!!**

Not very much is known about the course of fibromyalgia during pregnancy.

What we know is that women who are pregnant while already suffering from fibromyalgia reported a drastic increase in the severity of their symptoms. The third trimester was by far the most challenging during their pregnancy, with symptoms increasing in frequency. The symptoms remained more intense than normal until about three months after they had delivered. Pregnant women also had a greater incidence of post-partum depression. **On a brighter note, the babies born to women with fibromyalgia were all healthy, full-term, and of a good birth weight.**

- **Fibromyalgia and Breastfeeding: IMPORTANT!!!!**

Though the effects of pregnancy on fibromyalgia are unknown, more is known about breastfeeding and fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia makes breastfeeding quite difficult. This is not to say that it cannot be done, only that there are some extra things to keep in mind if you do decide to breastfeed.

Breastfeeding tends to be difficult because of the chronic muscle pain caused by fibromyalgia. Most women will have their symptoms return soon after they give birth, making breastfeeding even harder than it is normally. It is important to make feeding time as stress free as possible, both physically and emotionally. Use pillows to support your own head while you feed your baby. Think about getting a support or sling to prop your baby up, so you don't have to support his weight all on your own. You may find that lying down on the bed with your baby facing you will also make feeding easier; it will give you some extra time to rest. Be sure to nurse in a quiet area away from the hustle and bustle of daily life – this will reduce your own stress level and give you some time to bond with your little one.

- **Are you thinking about Getting Pregnant with Fibromyalgia?**

If you have fibromyalgia you may be wondering whether or not you should get pregnant. Rest assured that fibromyalgia will have no negative effect on your baby whatsoever. Therefore, the main issue is whether you feel your body can handle a pregnancy. Most women find that pregnancy is something to pursue even with fibromyalgia. If you do decide to get pregnant, here are some things to keep in mind:

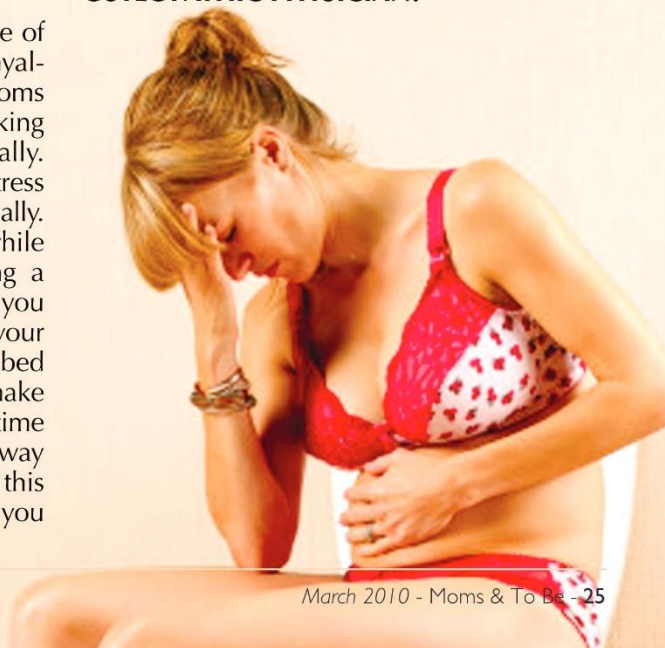
Try to plan your pregnancy at least a year ahead of time, so you can begin to build up your strength.

Reduce the amount of stress in your life as much as you possibly can.

Try to conceive when your symptoms are less intense. Avoid conceiving during a symptom flare up.

Speak with your doctor about your medications. Not all medications are safe to continue during pregnancy.

MOST IMPORTANT PLAN A ONE YEAR MANIPULATIVE TREATMENT WITH AN OSTEOPATHIC PHYSICIAN!



•Main Treatment:

Since pregnancy is a very delicate phase in a woman's life because of its sensitivity to drugs intake and to avoid any possible side effect on the baby's development, Osteopathic Medicine comes as the ideal treatment for FMS...

Osteopathic Manipulative treatment is based on the premise that restricted movement in the spine may lead to reduced function and pain. Spinal adjustment (manipulation) is one form of therapy an Osteopathic Physician uses to treat restricted spinal mobility. The goal is to restore spinal movement and, as a result, improve function, decreasing pain. Manipulation does not need to be forceful to be effective. An osteopathic physician may also use soft tissue manipulation, stretching muscles that are shortened or in spasm.

• Complementary Treatment to Osteopathic Medicine:

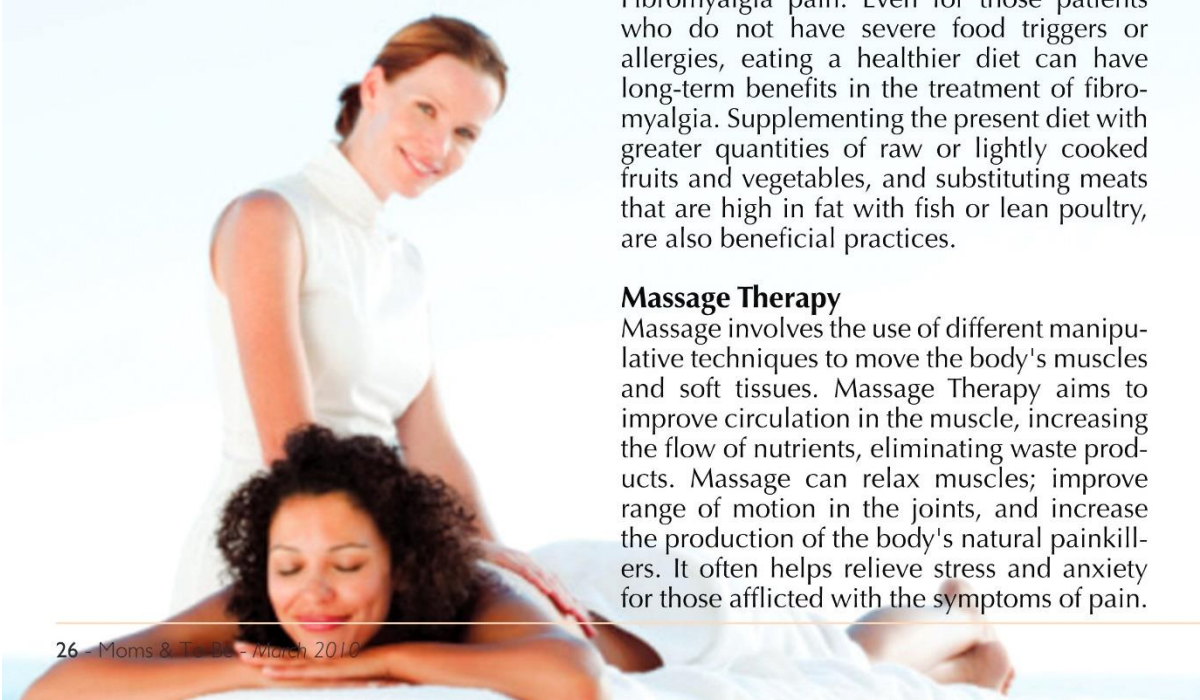
In addition to the principal treatment of OMTs (Osteopathic Manipulative treatment), it is interesting to consider many other complementary disciplines that will help with the treatment , such as:

Diet And Nutrition

A natural Fibromyalgia Treatment and balanced fibromyalgia nutrition diet can be helpful in counteracting stress, removing toxins from the body, and restoring the natural balance of nutrients. Homeopathy medicine, FIBRO-HELP products, helps patients by combating stress, replacing deficiencies, and supporting the immune system. Patients are recommended to limit the amount of sugar; caffeine; alcohol; and fried, processed, fatty foods consumed. These substances have been shown to irritate muscles and stress the system increasing Fibromyalgia pain. Even for those patients who do not have severe food triggers or allergies, eating a healthier diet can have long-term benefits in the treatment of fibromyalgia. Supplementing the present diet with greater quantities of raw or lightly cooked fruits and vegetables, and substituting meats that are high in fat with fish or lean poultry, are also beneficial practices.

Massage Therapy

Massage involves the use of different manipulative techniques to move the body's muscles and soft tissues. Massage Therapy aims to improve circulation in the muscle, increasing the flow of nutrients, eliminating waste products. Massage can relax muscles; improve range of motion in the joints, and increase the production of the body's natural painkillers. It often helps relieve stress and anxiety for those afflicted with the symptoms of pain.



Exercise

Fibromyalgia Exercise is one of the most powerful remedies in the treatment of fibromyalgia (FM). Increasing scientific evidence has shown that exercising for a minimum of 20 minutes per day will help fibromyalgia patients as a natural fibromyalgia treatment. Exercise becomes a key component in healing FM Syndrome patients because a properly designed routine will improve the body tissues, decrease pain, and increase mobility. The fibromyalgia exercise program must be slow and gradual. The goal is to improve overall health while decreasing FM symptoms.

Self Care – VERY IMPORTANT!!!!!!

Self Care is critical in the treatment of Fibromyalgia Syndrome. Some important tips for self care:

Reduce Stress

Avoid or limit overexertion and emotional stress. Allow time to relax daily practicing stress reduction techniques such as deep-breathing exercises or meditation for FMS treatment.

Sleep

Fatigue is one of the major symptoms of FM, getting enough sleep is essential. In addition to allotting enough time for sleep, get into a routine of sleeping and waking up at the same hour each day. Take short naps to restore energy in the body.

Fibromyalgia Exercise

Regular exercise will help improve chronic pain symptoms. Stretching, optimum posture techniques and relaxation practices are also helpful.

Pacing

Keep a balance on daily activities. If too much is done on a good day, take time off the following day, and rest to avoid bad days.

Nutrition and Healthy Lifestyle

Eat a balanced diet, limit caffeine and alcohol intake, get plenty of rest, exercise regularly, and do a leisure activity which is enjoyable and fulfilling as a complete FIBRO treatment.

It is important that patients should be aware that almost all osteopaths in Lebanon are not medical doctors, they have anarchic training and poor medical backgrounds, they are not recognized by social health insurance, nor the health ministry and nor the Lebanese Order of Physicians; so patients, for their wellbeing, should call and verify at the LOP (Lebanese Order of Physicians) if the therapist is a certified and registered medical doctor to ensure a good medical treatment as well as a good follow-up...



Elie MALEK MD,DOM
OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE

Member of the French Professional Association For
Osteopathic Physicians

Member of the French Society for Orthopedic and
Osteopathic Manual Medicine

Member of the World Osteopathic Health Organization
Training Monitor at the French Academy for
Post-Graduate Training for
Osteopathic Physicians - Paris

March 2010 - Mens & To Be - 27