MANAGING FIBROMYALGIA

What is fibromyalgia?
Fibromyalgia is a disorder that causes muscle pain and body stiffness. You may also feel tired all the time. This health problem is most common in women under age 50. Right now, fibromyalgia cannot be diagnosed with a lab test. Instead, your doctor will ask about your health history. He or she may also examine your joints and muscles. In most cases, your body will be checked for tender points that are linked with this health problem.

Symptoms of fibromyalgia
Along with the tender points, you may have some or all of the following symptoms:
- Burning or throbbing pain in many parts of the body (the pain may vary during the day)
- Stiffness or aching all over your body
- Difficulty sleeping
- Constant tiredness, even after a full night’s sleep
- Headaches
- Bowel problems

What Can You Do?
Fibromyalgia can be an ongoing problem. But it doesn’t have to keep you from doing the things you enjoy. You can take steps to feel better. Start by following a treatment plan that includes exercise and good sleep habits. It also helps to avoid triggers that can set off your symptoms.

Make Exercise a Part of Your Life
Gentle exercise can help lessen your pain. Keep the following in mind when you work out:
- Always stretch your muscles before and after you exercise
- Choose low-impact sports, such as fast walking, biking, swimming or other water exercises
- Don’t push yourself too hard at first—slowly build up your endurance over time
- Stick to it. For best results, exercise should become part of your normal life
- Get a Good Night's Rest—the you sleep, the more energy you’ll have

To get a good night’s rest, try these tips:
- Sleep only in a bed
- Don’t watch TV or read or work in bed
- Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning
- Don’t nap during the day
- Cut down on fluids during the evening
- Avoid exercise, alcohol, caffeine and tobacco for at least three hours before going to bed

Other Things You Can Do
No one knows what causes fibromyalgia. But, certain things, such as stress, can trigger symptoms or make them worse. The following tips may help you feel better:
- Learn ways to reduce or manage the stress in your life
- Maintain your health—eat a balanced diet and watch your weight

Fibromyalgia is frustrating and sometimes limiting, but it is not life threatening. It doesn’t lead to arthritis. And, it rarely gets worse over time. In fact, this health problem can often be controlled. Exercise, good sleep habits, medication and support all help you feel better.