

International Journal of Physiology, Health and Physical Education



ISSN Print: 2664-7265
ISSN Online: 2664-7273
Impact Factor: RJIF 8
IJPHPE 2024; 6(1): 106-108
www.physiologyjournals.com
Received: 10-03-2024
Accepted: 16-04-2024

Dr. Mahendra Pratap Gaur
Associate Professor,
Department of Physical
Education, I.G.N.T.U.,
Amarkantak, Madhya
Pradesh, India

Dr. Rakesh Prasad
Associate Professor,
Department of Physical
Education, I.G.N.T.U.,
Amarkantak, Madhya
Pradesh, India

Yoga for fibromyalgia

Mahendra Pratap Gaur and Rakesh Prasad

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26647265.2024.v6.i1b.92>

Abstract

Fibromyalgia is a disorder characterized by widespread musculoskeletal pain accompanied by fatigue, sleep, memory, and mood issues. Researchers believe that fibromyalgia amplifies painful sensations by affecting the way your brain and spinal cord process painful and non-painful signals. Symptoms often begin after an event, such as physical trauma, surgery, infection, or significant psychological stress. In other cases, symptoms gradually accumulate with no single triggering event. Women are more likely to develop fibromyalgia than men. Many people who have fibromyalgia also have tension headaches, temporomandibular joint (TMJ) disorders, irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety, and depression. While there is no cure for fibromyalgia, a variety of medications can help control symptoms. Exercise, relaxation, and stress-reduction measures also may help.

Keywords: Fatigue, fibromyalgia, pain, quality of life, sleep disturbance, yoga

Introduction

The symptoms of fibromyalgia were first described in the early 1800s when the condition was called “muscular rheumatism,” but fibromyalgia is still largely a mystery in the medical community today. Fibromyalgia is a chronic syndrome that can cause widespread body pain, fatigue, and cognitive issues. Fibromyalgia does not cause joint or muscle inflammation and damage, but it can increase a person’s feelings of joint or muscle pain. People with fibromyalgia often awaken tired, even though they report sleeping for long periods. Sleep is frequently disrupted by pain, and many patients with fibromyalgia have other sleep disorders, such as restless legs syndrome and sleep apnea. Because fibromyalgia tends to run in families, there may be specific genetic mutations that may make you more susceptible to developing the disorder.

Many researchers believe that repeated nerve stimulation causes the brain and spinal cord of people with fibromyalgia to change. This change involves an abnormal increase in levels of certain chemicals in the brain that signal pain. In addition, the brain's pain receptors develop a memory of the pain and become sensitized, meaning they can overreact to painful and nonpainful signals.

Some Facts about fibromyalgia

Although there is no test for fibromyalgia, doctors may order laboratory tests and X-rays to rule out conditions resembling fibromyalgia. There is no single known cause of fibromyalgia. Genetics, traumatic emotional or physical events, and sleep and mood disorders may all contribute to the condition. Fibromyalgia occurs mainly in females.

Symptoms

Symptoms can appear at any time during a person’s life, but they are most common between the ages of 30 and 50. Some common symptoms include:

- Widespread pain
- Joint and muscle stiffness after sleeping
- Headaches
- Irregular sleep patterns
- Tingling and numbness in the hands and feet
- Restless legs syndrome

Corresponding Author:
Dr. Mahendra Pratap Gaur
Associate Professor,
Department of Physical
Education, I.G.N.T.U.,
Amarkantak, Madhya
Pradesh, India

- Sensitivity to cold or heat
- Fatigue
- Problems with vision
- Nausea
- Pelvic and urinary issues
- Rapid weight gain
- Dizziness
- Cold- or flu-like symptoms
- Skin problems
- Chest symptoms
- Depression and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Breathing problems

Benefits of Yoga

Fibromyalgia is a widespread pain condition characterized not only by whole-body aches but also by extreme fatigue, mood disorders, and cognitive dysfunction. According to one study, nearly 1.4 crore people in India suffer from this chronic pain condition, and as many as 80% of them are women.

Yoga offers gentle stretching, mind-body awareness, and a slow and steady approach to physical fitness. A 2017 study found that yoga might reduce self-perceived disability and help with many fibromyalgia symptoms, including depression and fear or avoidance of movement. The study included eight participants with fibromyalgia, all of whom were women. Yoga for fibromyalgia offers three key benefits.

Reduces muscular tension

One of the hallmarks of fibromyalgia is muscle tightness and stiffness. Easy stretches for large muscles can prevent those muscles from seizing up or feeling stagnant. Even practicing a gentle forward fold with knees bent and chest relaxed onto the thighs can wake up tight hamstrings and back muscles.

Likewise, a wide-legged forward fold on the ground opens hips, and lunges keep hip flexors mobile. Warm muscles that stay flexible are less prone to tightness, which can help manage your fibro pain.

Improves spinal alignment

Yoga for fibromyalgia teaches how to align your skeletal system to support your whole body properly. In addition to flexibility and spinal alignment, gentle, consistent yoga for fibromyalgia helps keep muscles strong. Strong muscles provide more support. Strong muscles help increase stamina, so daily tasks are easier.

These muscle-strengthening benefits are available to everyone, regardless of their fitness level. Yoga can be gentle and does not need to be hot, intense, or fast-paced to increase muscle strength. Even seated yoga that increases core and back strength can help with fibromyalgia pain.

Improves sleep and mental health

The final (and arguably most important) benefit of yoga for fibromyalgia pain is mental.

Research shows that sleep quality reduces stress and calms the mind and body. Yoga helps manage stress by regulating stress hormones with daily practice, and intense yoga produces endorphins, the feel-good hormones in the brain that boost mood.

One of the earliest studies that looked explicitly at yoga for fibromyalgia came in 2010. Researchers at Oregon Health & Science University found that pain, fatigue, and depression were all significantly reduced in patients who did yoga when compared to those who did not.

Another study in 2015 looked specifically at an eight-week intervention of yoga for beginners with fibromyalgia. Researchers implemented a group class format and an at-home sequence of five yoga postures. They found that participants experienced symptom relief and were more likely to practice at home.

In 2016, a review of studies looked at yoga in terms of managing a variety of chronic illnesses, including chronic pain conditions. This review found that yoga offered significant improvement in exercise capacity and a correlated increase in the health-related quality of life (HRQL).

Best yoga poses for fibromyalgia

Raising Legs with wall

Some poses are particularly beneficial for helping to manage fibromyalgia pain or swelling. One excellent posture is raising the legs with the wall pose. To get into this pose, start with one hip against the wall. Lean back and support your torso with your forearms as you gently swing your legs up the wall. Your body will form an L-shape, with your back flat on the ground and your legs resting on the wall. Place a blanket under your hips if your hamstrings are tight to lessen the stretch. You can also move your hips away from the wall and gently bend your knees. Enjoy this pose for three to ten minutes or even longer.

This pose reduces stress and encourages blood circulation. It may also help reduce swelling in the ankles, which sometimes happens with fibromyalgia.

Folding Knees

Another feel-good restorative pose is folding knees. Lying on your back, bend your knees and bring the soles of your feet together. Allow your knees to fall open to the sides. Use blocks or pillows to support your knees if the stretch is too much for your inner leg.

Breathe here for three to five minutes, or even longer, soaking up the restorative benefits of the pose.

Twist Supine right-left

Another excellent restorative pose in yoga for fibromyalgia is twisting the supine right-left side. A gentle twist also helps keep the digestive system healthy—a bonus for people with fibromyalgia with intestinal symptoms.

Lie on your back and bring your knees to your chest. Open your arms to the shape of a T, then drop both knees to the right. Catch your knees with a pillow if you do not touch the ground. You might also place a pillow between your knees.

Dog Pose

Start on all fours with your toes tucked under. Walk your hands one handprint forward, then exhale and lift your knees to hover off the ground. Take a deep breath, exhale, and lift your hips into the sky, making an upside-down V shape. Knees can stay bent as you breathe here.

You can experiment by peddling the feet and straightening one leg and the other. Keep your hips lifting high. Move your shoulder blades onto your back as you stretch the

crown of your head to your hands, lengthening your neck. Keep your belly engaged, navel towards the spine. Take three to five breaths here, then lower to all fours on an exhale.

Chair fold

If mobility is an issue, try chair yoga for fibromyalgia. The following are three poses to get started.

Sit in a chair with a flat seat. Ensure your feet are firmly on the ground, with ankles below your knees. Have blocks or large books handy.

Take a nice deep breath, feeling your sitting bones firmly ground on the chair, then hinge at the hips to fold over your thighs. Feet can be apart if that feels better. Make sure your hands are resting on something. Use blocks or other props if the floor is far away.

Breathe here for three minutes, then slowly roll up, one vertebra at a time, with your head coming up last.

Figure-four hip opener

Fibromyalgia can create very tight hips. A seated figure-four stretch can help gently ease them open.

Sit again with a tall spine, feet firmly on the floor. Bring the right ankle to rest on the left knee, creating a figure-four shape. Let your hands rest on the right knee and ankle. If your right knee is level with the right ankle, you can hinge at the hips to fold forward until you feel the stretch. Otherwise, focus on releasing tension in your right hip so your knee can relax.

Stay here for three minutes, then switch to the other side. Even practicing just a few poses daily can help ease pain and other symptoms of fibromyalgia.

Conclusion

According to a 2010 study by the Oregon Health and Science University, yoga helps counter fibromyalgia symptoms such as pain, fatigue, stiffness, poor sleep, depression, poor memory, anxiety, and poor balance. Another 2011 study supports the benefits of yoga and meditation in the management of the symptoms of fibromyalgia, such as stiffness, anxiety, and depression. A 2013 study also suggested yoga as one of the suitable alternate exercises to deal with fibromyalgia.

References

1. Jahan F, Nanji K, Qidwai W, Qasim R. Fibromyalgia syndrome: An overview of pathophysiology, diagnosis, and management. *Oman Med J.* 2012;27:192-195.
2. Offenbacher M, Stucki G. Physical therapy in treating fibromyalgia. *Scand J Rheumatol Suppl.* 2000;113:78-85.
3. Mist SD, Firestone KA, Jones KD. Complementary and alternative exercise for fibromyalgia: A meta-analysis. *J Pain Res.* 2013;6:247-260.
4. Hauser W, Thieme K, Turk DC. Guidelines on the management of fibromyalgia syndrome systematic review. *Eur J Pain.* 2010;14:5-10.
5. Nijs J, Mannerkorpi K, Descheemaeker F, Van Houdenhove B. Primary care physical therapy in people with fibromyalgia: Opportunities and boundaries within a monodisciplinary setting. *Phys Ther.* 2010;90:1815-1822.
6. Martin L, Nutting A, Macintosh BR, Edworthy SM, Butterwick D, Cook J. An exercise program in the treatment of fibromyalgia. *J Rheumatol.* 1996;23:1050-1053.
7. Itoh K, Kitakoji H. Effects of acupuncture to treat fibromyalgia: A preliminary randomized controlled trial. *Chin Med.* 2010;23:5-11.
8. Hennard J. A protocol and pilot study for managing fibromyalgia with yoga and meditation. *Int J Yoga Therapy.* 2011;21:109-121.
9. Telles S, Gupta RK, Verma S, Kala N, Balkrishna A. Changes in vigilance, self-rated sleep, and state anxiety in military personnel in India following yoga. *BMC Res Notes.* 2018;11:518. Published 2018 Jul 28.
10. Carson JW, Carson KM, Jones KD, Mist SD, Bennett RM. Follow-up of yoga of awareness for fibromyalgia: Results at 3 months and replication in the wait-list group. *Clin J Pain.* 2012;28:804-813.