



# Being Active When You Have FIBROMYALGIA

## Prescription for Improving Healthy Body Status

Exercising with fibromyalgia is as easy as 1, 2, 3

### Getting Started

**Keep it Simple:** Sit less and move more. You don't have to do big things. ANY physical activity is good. Walk to get your mail. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. All small things add up.

Regular exercise can decrease fibromyalgia symptoms of pain, fatigue, and stiffness.



## 1 Get Aerobic Activity

### What

**Any continuous activity** (biking, walking, dancing). When you are experiencing a flare up of your fibromyalgia you may want to find a water-based exercise program to help with fibro pain.

### When

3-5 days/week

### How Hard

**Start very light and continue to work up as your pain and fatigue allow.** The overall goal should be for you to talk while exercising, but not sing.

**On a scale of 1-10 you should aim to move between a 2-6.**

1=short walk to get the mail  
2-6= walking around the block, dancing in the kitchen  
10=hard running

### How Long

**When you first start out, only exercise for a few minutes at a time.** You can walk around your house, walk outside, whatever is comfortable for your back pain. Aim for 3 minutes of exercise at a time.

As you exercise more increase your time by 3 minutes.

Example:

**Week 1:** Walk around your block at a level 2

**Week 2:** Walk around your block at level 3 and then add another 3 minutes of walking.

**Week 3:** Walk around your block at level 4 and add another 6 minutes of walking.

Keep this going for the next 2-3 months. Eventually you want to work up to 30 minutes of exercise at a time.

### PERCEIVED EXERTION CHART

10	<b>Very, Very Hard Activity</b> Completely out of breath, unable to talk
9	<b>Very Hard activity</b> Can speak only one word at a time
7-8	<b>Hard Activity</b> Out of breath, can speak a sentence or two
4-6	<b>Moderate Activity</b> Can talk but not sing
2-3	<b>Light Activity</b> Breathing is easy, can talk and sing
1	<b>No Activity</b>

**CAUTIONS:** Listen to your body. Don't try to do too much too soon. If your body hurts when you walk, stop for the day, but don't stop exercising all together. Rest, take your prescribed medications and try a different activity the next day. If walking causes too much pain, you can try water exercise or biking. Find an activity that doesn't cause you pain.



## 2 Get Strong

### What

Start by using your own body weight. Do each of the following:

**Sit & Stands:** Sit in a steady chair — using a kitchen chair is ideal and then stand up.

**Calf Raises:** Stand with your feet flat on the floor and shoulder-width apart. Raise yourself onto your toes and then lower your heels back to the floor. If you need to, stand near a countertop and hold onto it for extra balance.

**Knee Lifts:** In a standing position raise one knee. Lower your foot flat to the floor and raise the other knee.

**Do each of these exercises 10 times.**

**Rest 1 minute in between exercises if you need.**

*Example: 10 sit and stands, rest 1 minute, 10 calf raises, rest 1 minute, 10 knee lifts, rest 1 minute.*

### When : How Hard

**2-3 days/week.**

Rest at least one day in between

**Start slowly.** On a scale of 1-10 you should be working at 4-8.

1=sitting on the couch

4=just able to feel your muscles being used

8=sweating during the exercise

10=can't do the exercise

### How Long

**10 repetitions to start. Build up as you can.**

**Special Considerations:** Always be aware of how you feel when you are strength training. As you get stronger, and have less pain, you can add hand weights and resistance bands.

**Performing these exercises, including the suggested frequency, intensity and duration will help you meet the American College of Sports Medicine Guidelines for exercise participation and improve your health and fitness.**

### Local Resources

**Free:** Footprints for Fitness (Saginaw Center Courts), Walk with a Doc (YMCA)

**Paid:** Scan QR code for additional resources



## 3 Get Stretching

### What

Stretching is a great way to make you stronger. You should stretch before and after every exercise session.

**Do each of the following:**

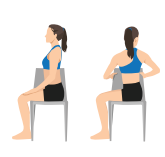
#### Arm Circles:



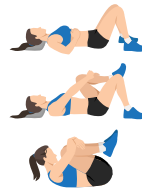
#### Toe Touches:



#### Waist Twists:

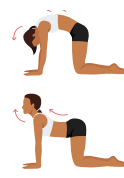


#### Knees to Chests:



Lay flat on your bed or the floor (whichever is more comfortable for you), bend both legs at the knees. Take one leg and hug it towards your chest. Hold that stretch for a few seconds. Release and repeat with the other leg. Release and repeat with both knees at the same time.

#### Cat Cows:



Kneel on the floor and put your hands on the floor in front of you. Keep your hands shoulder-width apart and your knees directly below your hips. Inhale deeply while curving your lower back and bringing your head up, tilting your pelvis up like a "cow." Exhale deeply and bring your abdomen in, arching your spine and bringing your head and pelvis down like a "cat."

### When

**You should stretch before and after every exercise session.**

### How Hard : How Long

**Stretch as far as you can until you feel muscle tightness.**

Don't overstretch, this could hurt your muscles. If you can't quite touch your toes, aim for your calf or your knees.

**Do 5-10 of each stretch before and after every exercise session.**

Stretch before you walk and after your walk is done. Stretch before you do your knee lifts, sit to stands and calf raises, and stretch when you are done.

**Special Considerations:** Coping with fibromyalgia pain can be hard. Here are a few tips that might help reduce your fibro pain:

**Start with small goals.** If your fatigue and pain only allow you to exercise for only 10 minutes at a time that is fine. Start small and work up to larger amounts of time.

**Know your body and its symptoms.** If you know that your fibro pain is worse in the morning than it is at night, plan exercise for nighttime. Sometimes temperatures affect fibro pain. You may find it easier to exercise in cooler weather than warmer weather. Or you might be able to tolerate warm water exercise over cool water exercise. Find what works for your symptoms.

**When you are having a fibro flare don't stop all movement.** You might not be able to exercise for a few days during your flare, but you still want to move around the house doing daily chores such as dishes or laundry.