

Fibromyalgia and Sleep

101:

AN INTRODUCTION

The sleep problem in fibromyalgia



Welcome

I am so glad that you are here!

Question: Who has the most power to change our quality of life?

Us.

Every day we get to make many decisions, small and large, that add up to our life.

How do we start? Knowledge.



Who am I?

Someone with lived experience who has changed my life by taking control (I have had chronic pain since I was 14, chronic fatigue since 21 and insomnia since somewhere in between).

I have been sharing my journey on www.melissavsfibromyalgia.com for several years.

I am the author of *Melissa vs Fibromyalgia: My Journey Fighting Chronic Pain, Chronic Fatigue and Insomnia* and *Pregnancy and Fibromyalgia*.

I am also a Fibromyalgia and Meditation Coach.

I am just plain passionate about helping others cut down their journey to better wellness.



The Sleep Problem

- Insomnia in all its forms is a well documented problem for those with fibromyalgia.
- Sleep has negative effects on all human beings, but even worse for those with chronic pain and fatigue.
- Yet many of us struggle every single night.
- I theorized for years that sleep would help me but no doctor ever wanted to help and I had the sleep hygiene and natural sleep options down. They would rarely meet a person who had researched and tried more!
- When low dose naltrexone finally helped me sleep a bit better I realized I was right! Which is why this course is foundational!



We will discuss

In this video:

- What insomnia is – how it presents and side effects
- What the literature says about the sleep problem in fibromyalgia

In the next video we will dig into:

- Sleep hygiene
- Natural sleep help



Insomnia

Insomnia in fibromyalgia presents as:

- Finding it difficult to get to sleep
- Struggling to stay asleep
- Waking too early
- Not feeling refreshed upon waking
- More than three nights per week



Insomnia

Side effects of insomnia?

- Fatigue
- Pain (lowers pain thresholds)
- Headache
- Attention/concentration problems
- Anxiety or other mood problems
- Lack of motivation
- Vulnerable to infection



What the literature says

- “Studies also suggest that sleep problems are present in fibromyalgia regardless of whether the person is depressed.”
- “We don't know for certain why fibromyalgia and insomnia occur together so frequently, but it may be due to some common physiology. A prime candidate is neurotransmitter [serotonin](#), which plays an important role in regulating the sleep cycle, and is deficient in many cases of fibromyalgia. The most common treatments for fibromyalgia involve increasing the amount of serotonin that's available to your brain.”

<https://www.verywellhealth.com/insomnia-fibromyalgia-716169>



What the literature says

- “Nearly all people with fibromyalgia experience some form of sleep problem. Their poor sleep contributes to a whole range of challenges with mental and physical health and daily functioning, including its ability to *exacerbate other fibromyalgia symptoms*. One study found that 99 percent of [fibromyalgia patients suffered poor sleep quality](#) that influenced how severely they experienced physical pain, fatigue, and difficulty with social functioning.”
- “A 2014 study from the United Kingdom found that non-restorative sleep—the kind where you wake feeling tired and worn out after a night’s rest—was linked to the [development of widespread pain](#) in adults over age 50.”
- “And a 2011 study by Norwegian scientists found the [risk of developing fibromyalgia](#) was higher in women who experienced sleep problems—and the more severe the women’s sleep troubles, the higher their fibromyalgia risk.”
- <https://thesleepdoctor.com/2018/09/18/heres-the-latest-on-how-to-tackle-fibromyalgia-sleep-problems/>



What the literature says

- “In early 2019 (surprisingly late in history), we finally have the first proper brain study of sleep deprivation, one of those studies that looks at what parts of the brain “light up.”¹⁵ Although pain doesn’t happen in just one area of the brain, there are specific areas responsible for certain major features of pain. Sleep deprivation boosts responses to pain “within the primary sensing regions of the brain’s cortex,” and — more sinister — suppresses activity in the areas we use to “fine tune” pain experiences (“regions that modulate pain processing—the striatum and insula”). And that is a hellish cocktail: louder pain alarms, and less ability to mute them.”

<https://www.painscience.com/articles/insomnia-until-it-hurts.php>



Recap

But there is good news! Knowing this stuff helps us fight the insomnia as best as we can! Knowledge is power. For example the quote about serotonin potentially being a factor means we could look up 5HTP and give that a go (5HTP is a more natural way to increase serotonin than usually prescribed antidepressants) but we will get to that...

In the next video we will discuss sleep hygiene tips and ways to improve sleep. And then we are going to make your plans!

