

What you can do

(An excerpt from the Mayo Clinic¹)

The sooner your doctor arrives at a fibromyalgia diagnosis, the sooner you can begin treatment to get your fibromyalgia symptoms under control.

As your doctor moves toward a fibromyalgia diagnosis, he or she may want to rule out many diseases and conditions that mimic or are related to fibromyalgia. Testing for some of these diseases and conditions may make sense to you – for instance, you may find it reasonable that your doctor wants to rule out rheumatoid arthritis, since that disease also causes pain.

Testing for other conditions – such as lupus, multiple sclerosis or sleep apnea – may make less sense to you. But fibromyalgia can mimic or even overlap many other conditions. Talking openly with your doctor about your concerns can help you understand what he or she is looking for with each test and how each test is part of making a final diagnosis.

The following tips may help.

Ask questions

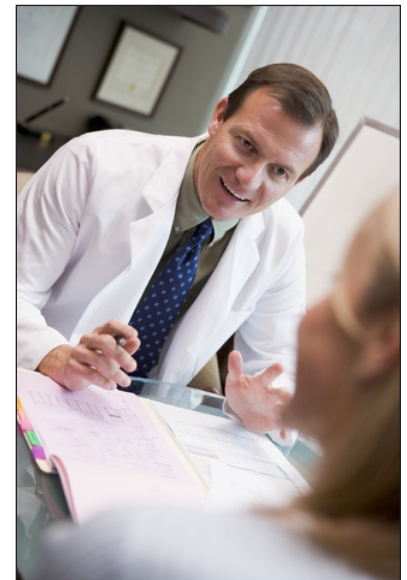
Ask your doctor to explain each disease and condition he or she is testing for and why the test is necessary. Does your doctor believe your symptoms more closely match another disorder? Or will the test simply rule out a condition that has similar symptoms? When you better understand the diagnostic process, you'll feel less frustrated.

Keep records

Every time you have a test, ask for a copy of your test results. Bring this paperwork with you when you see a new doctor or specialist. Sometimes there may be an advantage to having an exam or test repeated, but in many cases, you may save time and money by showing your new doctor your records. Many times, your records will be forwarded to a new doctor or specialist, but that isn't always the case. In some instances, the new doctor or specialist will receive only portions of your medical records.

Find the right doctor

Find a doctor you trust – someone who communicates well and is willing to work as a team with you. Not all doctors have a lot of knowledge about fibromyalgia, and some may even have outdated notions of the condition. If your health insurance plan allows, switch to a new doctor who is more suitable. Even if a doctor doesn't have a lot of experience with fibromyalgia cases, a doctor who is interested in helping you and willing to learn more can be a good advocate for you.



Build a good relationship

Whether with your current doctor or a new doctor, build a good partnership. Be open and honest with your doctor about concerns you may have about the diagnosis process. Avoid coming to appointments angry or making accusations. Tell your doctor you're frustrated, and ask how you can help move things along. Ask your doctor to be open about what's frustrating or puzzling about your symptoms.

Source:

1. Mayo Clinic (2009). Fibromyalgia symptoms or not? Understand the fibromyalgia diagnosis process [online]. Retrieved February 7, 2011. From <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fibromyalgia-symptoms/AR00054/NSECTIONGROUP=2>.

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