FIBROMYALGIA
An interdisciplinary approach

• Physical Medicine
• Social Work
• Occupational Therapy
• Physical Therapy
Living with fibromyalgia means more than just pain.

You may also have stiffness, trouble sleeping, and feel tired, anxious, or depressed. Fibromyalgia can be especially difficult because doctors do not know what causes it, and there isn’t a cure yet. But there are things you can do to help manage your symptoms.

At Kaiser Permanente, we believe in an interdisciplinary approach to helping you with your fibromyalgia.

- Treatment and support is based in partnering with your primary care provider for services that will help you live more comfortably and fully with fibromyalgia.
- Research shows that movement, exercise, relaxation and stress relief play a major role in reducing fibromyalgia symptoms.
- Fibromyalgia pain works differently than other types of pain, and research tells us that opioids or narcotic medications are not effective in fibromyalgia pain. At Kaiser Permanente, we avoid the use of opioid or strong narcotic medication for fibromyalgia.

This booklet provides you with valuable information from our experts in fibromyalgia care. In addition to this booklet, kp.org has a wide variety of resources to help you manage your Fibromyalgia. Go to kp.org and type in ‘fibromyalgia’ to access this information.

Your primary care provider and the interdisciplinary team are here to support you in your health and wellness journey.

TRY NEW THINGS * PRACTICE SKILLS * HOPE
Managing fibromyalgia my way

Three months from today ____________________
(date) I will know I am doing better if:

Example:
____ I have enough energy to spend time with friends once a week.
____ I can do my chores for 15 minutes.
____ I do not have to take more than one day off work per month because of fibromyalgia.

These are my own goals:

1. _______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________

2. _______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________

3. _______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________
   _______________________________________________

Before today, if I were having a “pretty good” day, this is what I would do to manage fibromyalgia:

Example:

What: take a 10 minute warm shower
When: just before going to bed
Effect: easier to fall asleep

1. What: __________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 
   When: ____________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 
   Effect: __________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 

2. What: __________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 
   When: ____________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 
   Effect: __________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 

3. What: ___________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 
   When: ____________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________ 
   Effect: __________________________________________ 
   __________________________________________________
Managing fibromyalgia my way

Before today, if I were having a “not so good” day, this is what I would do to manage fibromyalgia.

Examples:
What: take a 30-minute nap
When: mid-morning and mid-afternoon
Effect: better concentration after napping

1. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

2. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

3. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________

Ideas from this booklet that I plan to try (circle all that apply):

1. Learn more about fibromyalgia by:
   a. Reviewing these materials later
   b. Visiting a website or reading a book listed in the resource section.
   c. Other: ________________________________________

2. Deep breathing.
   a. Three times daily
   b. Throughout my day, whenever I notice pain or limitations.
   c. Other form of relaxation: _______________________

3. Do normal activities differently, such as:
   _________________________________________________

4. Exercises such as:
   a. Take a walk
   b. Stretch gently for 5 minutes a.m. and p.m.
Managing fibromyalgia my way

After reading this booklet, if I were having a “pretty good” day, this is what I plan to try to manage fibromyalgia:

Examples:
What: learn more about fibromyalgia
When: 20 minutes when I feel most alert
Effect: better able to manage fibromyalgia

1. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

2. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

3. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

After reading this booklet, if I were having a “not so good” day, this is what I plan to try to manage fibromyalgia:

Examples:
What: deep breathing
When: every hour while awake, for 1 minute
Effect: lower stress level

1. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

2. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________

3. What: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   When: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
   Effect: __________________________________________
   __________________________________________________
This illustration shows the interaction (a “vicious cycle”) between pain and its results. Pain causes physical and emotional phenomena that, in turn, cause additional pain.

**Muscle atrophy**  
Loss of strength makes any physical activity potentially painful and can impair your ability to participate in rehabilitation.

**Loss of elasticity**  
Loss of flexibility makes reinjury more likely and can lead to contractures.

**Guarding**  
Muscles tense to protect the injured area – prolonged tension makes the muscles more sensitive. Odd positions taken to avoid pain put strain on other muscles, spreading pain to other parts of the body.

**Fear and anxiety**  
Stress increases release of “fight-or-flight” chemical (norepinephrine), leaving body and mind exhausted.

**Depression**  
Exhaustion is linked to depression. Physical pain is intensified in depression. Levels of serotonin, a neurotransmitter that increases mood and inhibits pain, fall.

**Disturbed sleep**  
Decreases the supply of endorphins, which normally blunt pain. Pain is felt more intensely. Mood and stress tolerance worsen.

**Nervous system changes**  
After an injury, pain causes nervous system changes. These include changes in neurotransmitter type and balance, synaptic contacts, even possible cell death. Stimuli that were previously not painful may become painful, and pain itself intensifies.

Adapted from “Pain Management Doesn’t have to be a Pain: Working and Communicating Effectively With Patients Who Have Chronic Pain.” The Permanente Journal, Spring 2005. Volume 9 No 2, page 42.
Disease characteristics

Characteristics
It is a chronic condition of pain and fatigue. It has been described since the 1800s under a variety of names: chronic rheumatism, myalgia, myositis, and fibrositis. In the late 1980s Dr. Bennett at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, OR, recommended that the condition be more appropriately called Fibromyalgia Syndrome, meaning “pain of the muscle and fibrous tissue.”

The professional association of rheumatologists agreed in 1990, along with criteria for diagnosis:

- History of widespread pain (on both sides of the body, present for at least three months).
- Pain in at least 11 of 18 “tender point” sites.

People also have at least three of the following symptoms:
- Sleep difficulties.
- Fatigue.
- Chronic headaches.
- Gastric problems.
- Subjective numbness or swelling.
- Anxiety or depression.
- Changes in pain with weather, stress, or physical activity.

Onset
Fibromyalgia is a common condition that affects two to four percent of the U.S. population. It is 10 times more common in women than men. It occurs most often between the ages of 20 and 55, although children may also have it. There is no lab test for it.

It can be caused by a chronic pain condition, such as arthritis, or a stress or injury, such as a neck injury after a car accident or a fall.

It may start after an infection or viral condition.

Lack of exercise and a sleep disturbance may be a cause or may be a symptom.

Why does it hurt?

- In people with fibromyalgia, levels are three times higher of Substance P in cerebral spinal fluid, which transmits messages of pain to the brain.
- Serotonin promotes restful sleep and affects the perception of pain by “turning down the volume.” For many people with fibromyalgia, their serotonin levels are decreased.
- Growth hormones are produced during deep sleep. People with fibromyalgia have lower levels of growth hormone, which cause muscles to be more vulnerable to trauma.
Diaphragmatic breathing can bring about a feeling of calm and relaxation when it is purposefully done. It is recommended that you wear loose, comfortable clothing and that you find a quiet, relaxing place to practice.

First, notice how you breathe now. Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach. Breathe as you normally do. Notice the movement of your hands. Which hand has the most movement? With deep breathing, the goal is to have the hand on your stomach move obviously, while the hand on your chest barely moves.

Now, get into a comfortable position. You may want to close your eyes so you can focus better on the mid-section of your body.

Practicing the skill
Place one or both hands on the lower part of your stomach and breathe in so that the incoming air expands that area and gently pushes against your hands. Then gently push with your hands as you exhale slowly. Relax a moment, then inhale again. Inhale smoothly through your nose as it helps warm, filter, and moisten the air before it enters the lungs. If using an image helps, picture a balloon in your stomach that inflates when you inhale and deflates when you exhale. Practice this several times. Now, imagine the tension and stress leaving your body as you exhale while mentally saying to yourself, “I am becoming more and more relaxed and calm.”

Here are some important tips for learning diaphragmatic breathing:

- Start practicing with three to five breath cycles. Slowly increase your practice time from one minute up to five minutes gradually. Practice several times per day.
- In the beginning, you might find it helpful to practice deep breathing while lying down or on your bed or on the floor. Bend your knees and place your feet a comfortable width apart.
- If you feel light-headed, dizzy, or anxious, you may be breathing too deeply or too quickly. If this happens, stop practicing for a moment and breathe normally until the symptoms pass.
- You may practice counting your exhalations from one to four, then restart at one and repeat. This practice helps to improve concentration and a meditative state.
- When your attention wanders, bring it back to watching or counting your breaths.
- Be patient and gentle with yourself.
Sleep hygiene

How to get good deep sleep!

Develop a sleep and wake routine:

- Decide on a set “bedtime.” Go to bed at the same time every night, no matter what day of the week it is. Get up at the same time every morning. This helps your body establish a regular sleep/wake cycle. Eventually, it will help you feel sleepy before bed.

- Avoid daytime naps, which tend to fragment sleep at night. If you need a “power nap,” keep it to no more than 20 minutes.

Have a pre-bedtime routine:

- Avoid mental stimulation during the hour before bedtime. For example, don’t finish office work, read e-mail, make phone calls, or have big discussions with family members before bed. If you are a bedtime “worrier,” set aside another time of day to outline problems and possible solutions.

- Get ready for bed ½ to 1 hour before bedtime so that you have time to unwind.

- Choose a physically calming activity: consider taking a warm bath to relax. Heat a microwave rice/seed bag to place on neck or feet. Practice diaphragmatic breathing.

- Choose a mental calming activity that you do each night just before bed or while in bed. For example: play a piece of soothing music, read a calming poem, focus on the sensation of slow breathing, or visualize being in a peaceful place.

Sleep environment

- Make sure your sleeping conditions are as comfortable as possible. Consider getting a Cuddle Ewe mattress pad or Sleep Number bed. If you share a bed with a restless partner, consider a larger mattress to have more space.

- Sleep positioning: use a body pillow or extra pillows to support side arm/leg in neutral positions of comfort. Try wearing a basic wrist splint and/or a soft padded elbow block if you tend to curl these joints up.

- Keep your bedroom as quiet and dark as possible. Earplugs or an eye mask can help. If you have a noisy partner or neighbors, consider a white noise humidifier.

- Ideal room temperature for sleeping is usually around 65 degrees F.

- Reserve your bed for sleep and sex only. Avoid eating and watching TV in bed.
Sleep hygiene

Sleep-disturbers
• Avoid eating 2 to 3 hours before bed. Avoid foods that upset your stomach. Try to eat a carbohydrate dinner to boost sugar and serotonin production before bed (eat protein for breakfast and lunch instead of dinner).
• Avoid alcohol after dinner. When it wears off during the night, it may cause periods of wakefulness. Avoid drinking a lot of liquids before bed.
• Avoid caffeine-containing products within 6 hours before bedtime:
  • Foods: chocolate, coffee, ice cream.
  • Beverages: coffee, tea, soft drinks.
  • Medications: some pain-relievers (Anacin, Midol, Excedrin).
• If you or your partner snore or have sleep apnea or congestion, look into Breathe-Right strips, saline nose spray, or see your clinician for treatment.
• If you are grinding teeth or clenching your jaw at night, wear a sports mouth guard or have a custom one made through your dentist.

Movement/exercise
• Daily movement/exercise helps reduce stress-related insomnia.
• Try to get 30 minutes of movement in each day: walking, swimming, bicycling, jogging. You can break these into 10-minute sessions, 3 times a day.
• Stretch before and after exercise. Try to stretch at other times throughout the day.
• Avoid exercise 2 hours before bedtime as the stimulation makes it difficult to fall asleep.

Remember
It may take 2 to 4 weeks of following these suggestions before you notice improvement in your sleep. If you still have difficulty sleeping, consider contacting your clinician. Be cautious in your use of sedatives because you can develop a tolerance. These other simple measures often help you feel more rested. Good sleep hygiene will make a difference!
Energy conservation and prioritization of goals

The purpose of energy conservation and work simplification is to manage your activity level so you do not “overdo it” and cause a flare-up of pain. Here are some guiding principles that will help you know how to do this:

- Plan ahead: Balance periods of rest or light activities with times of increased activity. Establish a planning time either in the morning the night before. Plan enough time for activities so you don’t feel rushed or frustrated. Include what you need to do and want to do each day. Include fun and relaxing activities with work and daily chores. You may benefit from planning ahead on a weekly or monthly calendar to distribute high-energy tasks.

- Prioritize: Set tasks in priority each day – there may be things that “must” be done at a certain time, and other things that can be delayed or “delegated.” Break down large tasks into small steps.

Ask yourself:

- Is this really necessary?
- Is this the best way to do the task?
- Is this the best time to do the task?
- Am I the best person to do the job?

Some tasks can be eliminated, or reduced in scope, such as ironing, washing the car, or vacuuming.

- Pace yourself: work at a steady pace – not too fast. Rest before you get too tired. Don’t rush – rushing increases your energy consumption and stress. For many tasks you can sit instead of stand. You can slide heavy pots rather than lift them.

- Organize your storage and work space:
  a. Keep your desk uncluttered – have files for bills, mail that needs responses, or needs filing. Keep the trash-can handy.
  b. Keep items needed for a task together – such as baking supplies, cleaning supplies, etc., to eliminate extra steps.
  c. Keep most used items within easy reach, especially at your desk or in the kitchen. Reaching higher and farther from your body requires greater energy consumption.

- Posture: Good posture will reduce fatigue, and allow you to breathe more efficiently.

Sit or stand using good body mechanics. Use larger muscles when ever possible. For example, stir using your entire arm rather than wrist motions.
Activities of daily living

Here are ways to simplify and improve self-care activities. For all daily activities, remember to pace yourself and take rest/stretch breaks. If you are doing something repetitive, take a break every 15 minutes! Set a reminder timer.

Dressing
- Choose clothes the night before.
- Limit buying clothes that require “dry cleaning only” or ironing.
- Consider using adaptive devices: sock aid, shoe horn, long reacher, elastic shoe laces, button hooks, or loops for zipper pull.
- Try front-snap bras.
- Wear supportive, comfortable shoes.

Grooming
- Hair care
  - Easy care style.
  - Shampoo bottles with pump feature instead of squeeze.
  - Hair dryer on a stand, or support your elbow rather than raise dryer above your head.
- Dental care
  - Toothpaste from pump or use a device to push it out of tube.
- Make-up
  - Try lipstick and mascara that stay on all day (permanent lipstick and eyeliner are also possible).

Bathroom
- Tall toilets.
- Grab bars
  - Hand held shower hose for shower.
- Warm bath (limit of 15 minutes).
- Towel heater.

Accessories
- Jewelry
- Magnetic converter for necklaces
- Bracelet buddy for clasps (Living Better with Arthritis Catalog).
- Purse
- Small, light, carry fewer coins, and cards.
- Diagonal shoulder strap, back pack, or waist pack reduces weight on hands.

Medicine
- Ask for easy to open pill bottles or get a Pill Cap Opener (Living Better with Arthritis Catalog).
- Use mail-order pharmacy (online or by phone) to save time and money with prescriptions mailed to home or vacation location.

Carrying
- Keep extra supplies in your car (instead of purse) – glove compartment or a box in the trunk.
- Keep extra cloth bags with shoulder straps in the car for carrying groceries and other purchases.
- If you must carry items by hand, keep your elbows in close to body, use both hands to scoop, try to wrap an arm around bigger items against your body.
- Use a rolling shopping cart for groceries even if you think you’re going in for “just a few” items.
- If you use the phone frequently or for lengths of time, use a headset or speakerphone.
Activities of daily living

Driving

- Drive an automatic. Use cruise-control when able but not when rainy!
- Adjust the seat and wheel so you can comfortably reach. Drive with your hands at “9 and 3” or below, especially if your car has airbags.
- Give yourself extra forearm support and low-back support with pillows or rolled towels. These help reduce shoulder/neck muscular effort.
- On long trips, take many stretch breaks. Bring a pillow for the passenger. Take a cooler to store ice packs or bags.
- Use an enlarged key holder – it makes it easier to turn the key (and find keys in a purse).
- Wear driving gloves in winter to increase texture and traction to steering wheel. Or try a padded steering wheel with lamb’s wool cover or foam piece.
- Try getting swivel car seats. They make it easier to get in/out of your car – or just use a plastic bag to slide on.

Kitchen

- Cook simple meals. Seek out cookbooks (check library) that reduce pans and prep time. When you have the energy, cook a double-size meal and put one in the freezer.
- Set crock-pot meals up in the morning or the night before.
- Use built-up handles on vegetable peeler, spoons, knives, and jar openers (OXO brand).
- Use sharp knives for cutting.
- Try automatic one-button can openers and jar openers.
- Use electric food processors, mixers, and peelers.
- Set up a complete grocery list in a plastic sheet so you can mark off what you need. The Container Store has pre-made grocery lists to check off.
- Set up an Internet account for online ordering and store pick-up or home delivery.
- Consider getting a padded cashier mat (Office Max or Office Depot) to place in front of your sink.
- Try sitting in a chair to unload dishwasher to counter level, then stand to put away items.
- Arrange cupboards so things you use the most are within easy reach. Consider vertical plate storage to move just one at a time.
- Use a rolling cart for transporting dishes, silverware, napkins, etc. Sit and unload at the table and sink.
- Buy lightweight dishes and pans (avoid heavy cast-iron).
Activities of daily living

Cleaning house
- Use pipe insulation to enlarge grips on cleaning tools (mop, broom, vacuum, etc.).
- Vacuum and sweep using your legs and entire body to move, not just your arms. Keep elbows close to side.
- Get a lightweight vacuum or one with a canister and separate wand.
- Have a vacuum on each floor to avoid lugging it up/down stairs.
- Use a small battery powered hand vacuum for stairs. Kneel down instead of bending.
- Use long-handled dusters.
- Use lightweight buckets and mops (Swiffer). Try a bucket on wheels and fill it from the sink sprayer hose.

Laundry
- Do not carry laundry baskets up/down stairs. Recruit family members to do their own or to at least move clothes to/from laundry room. Use a duffle bag, backpack, or pillowcase to allow one hand free to hold the railing. Kick a closed drawstring bag down the stairs!
- Loosen dirt of stubborn spots by using an overnight cleanser.
- Put a chair and a reacher next to the dryer to sit and pull clothes out.
- Avoid clothes that need ironing. Catch clothes before completely dry and smooth them by hand or hang.
- Fold laundry on a tabletop to support weight of towels, pants, etc.
- Store heavier items on lower shelves.

Gardening
- Get ergonomic tools with enlarged handles or enlarge yours with pipe insulation.
- Wear gardening gloves with rubber/textured palm for improved gripping.
- Use spring-loaded shears and pruners.
- Keep tools sharpened.
- Sit on a stool or kneel on a pad instead of hunching over.
- Water with a hose or carry a small watering can close to your body. Use a long-handled attachment for hanging plants. Use a wheelbarrow to carry a watering can longer distances.

Miscellaneous
- Get spring-loaded scissors.
- Use built-up pens: XXL Bic, Dr. Grip, Pilot, or Pen Again.
- When reading, support the book on a pillow or book holder.
- For hand-craft activities (sewing, knitting, etc.), Give yourself forearm support on a table or pillows. Be aware of your posture and use a lumbar low-back roll/pillow.
- When walking dogs, enlarge leash grip with pipe insulation, look into a “gentle leader,” or hook leash to your belt and use arm to just steer.
- When traveling, pack two small suitcases instead of one large. Use suitcases with wheels. Bring an empty waterbottle carry on and fill just before boarding plane. Bring earplugs and mask.
- For entertaining/holidays, consider potluck, mail order, choose charity/good deeds for some gifts, simplify preparations, communicate with family, plan ahead!
- Simplify money management with direct deposit and auto-bill pay programs.
Ergonomics and posture

The term “ergonomics” comes from the Greek words ergon (work) and nomoi (natural laws).

Ergonomics involves designing work spaces to fit the person, not forcing the person to fit the work space. Having good ergonomics facilitates proper use of your body for work, home, or leisure activities. This involves sitting or standing with good posture and using good body mechanics, so that there is the least amount of stress on your body tissues during activities.

While there are “ideal” recommendations, we should try to move and change positions frequently, as we function best when we are “fluid” and not immobilized. We should be exercising to help us stay aerobically fit and strong.

Risk factors that can affect our bodies include poor posture, repetition, duration of compression (leaning against a hard surface or edge), and force/effort.

Body mechanics basics for lifting

- Maintain spinal alignment. Avoid twisting, bending at the waist, over-extending backwards, or bending sideways.
- Keep a good base of support, with your feet about shoulder-width apart, and body weight balanced over both feet, with one foot slightly forward.
- Hold objects close to your center of gravity (close to you), below your belly button.
- Ideally, use the largest muscles available for an activity, in their strongest position (mid range).
Ergonomics and posture

Posture
Good posture reduces stress on ligaments and fatigue of muscles from awkward positions.

• **Standing**
  Tighten your stomach and tuck in your buttocks, keep your shoulders back, and your head up and straight. If working at a counter or table, you may prop one leg on a stool or the inside of the cabinet and alternate legs at intervals.

• **Sitting**
  Have low back support for the curve of your back, and sit balanced on both hips. Knees should be slightly lower than your hips, with your feet flat on the floor. Shoulders should be back, with head up and level. You may rest your hands on your hips or in your pockets to help keep your shoulders back.

• **Lying down**
  Have a small pillow supporting your neck when lying on your back, and a larger or folded pillow when lying on your side. Your may also use a pillow under an arm or leg, or behind your back, to help position your back and hips in good alignment.

Computer workstation
• Put keyboard directly in front of you, and slightly lower than your elbows. You may choose to have a wrist support. Ergonomic split keyboards are available.

• Place mouse at the same level as your keyboard.

• Put monitor directly in front of you, no more than an arm’s length away, so that the top of the monitor is at eye level, and the center of the screen is where your gaze naturally falls.

• If you use a document holder, put it next to your monitor, at an angle easy to see.

• If you use the phone frequently or for lengths of time, consider using a head set or a speakerphone.

• Use a foot stool if your feet don’t reach the floor.

• Set a timer for regular breaks every 20 to 30 minutes, so you can stretch and stand briefly.

• Create a quiet space – consider earplugs.
Good posture is important. Avoid slouching and forward head thrust. Maintain curve in low back and align ears over shoulders, hips over ankles.

Sit upright, head facing forward. Try using a roll to support lower back. Keep shoulders relaxed, and avoid rounded back. Keep hips level with knees. Avoid crossing legs for long periods.

When reading, hold material in tilted position and maintain good sitting posture.

Position work to face forward. Use proper work and seat height. Keep shoulders back and down, wrists straight, and elbows at right angles. Use chair that provides full back support. Add footrest and lumbar roll as needed.

Place pillow between knees. Use cervical support under neck and a roll around waist as needed.

Place pillow under knees. A pillow with cervical support and a roll around waist are also helpful.
Bend at hips and knees, not back. Keep feet shoulder-width apart.

Squat with knees apart to reach lower shelves and drawers.

Squat to reach or rearrange your work area, and avoid twisting and bending.

Pushing is preferable to pulling. Keep back in proper alignment, and use leg muscles to do the work.

Place one foot on ledge and one hand on counter. Bend other knee slightly to keep back straight.

Avoid twisting or bending back. Pivot around using foot movements, and bend at knees if needed when reaching for articles.
Insert tool vertically into soil and step on blade, then lift out small amounts.

Push from end of handle, shifting body weight from back leg to front leg. Keep knees bent and avoid twisting your back.

Squat or kneel. Knee pads may be helpful.

Keep arms close to sides and walk with lawn mower.

Distribute weight evenly on both sides. Use a cart whenever possible. Do not twist trunk. Move body as a unit.

Hold the vacuum with arm held at side. Step back and forth to move it, keeping head up. Avoid twisting.
Move heavy items one at a time, or move portions of the contents.

Ask for help and delegate to others when possible. Coordinate your movements when lifting together, and maintain the low back curve.

Squat down, and bring item close to lift.

When reaching into cart with one arm, lift opposite leg to keep back straight.
Squat down to pick up baby, and bring close before standing up. Use knees and keep back straight.

Squat or kneel down close to edge of tub to lower child into tub or to lift out. Be sure there is a safety mat inside.

Keep baby close and as upright as possible.

Stand close and keep back straight. Bend knees to put baby in or take baby out of car seat.
Sensory sensitivity

Management of sensory sensitivity

Sensory sensitivity means that a person is extra sensitive in one or more of the five senses – touch, taste, smell, hearing, and vision. People with fibromyalgia often have sensory sensitivities.

You can manage sensory sensitivity when it occurs by removing yourself from the environment that is causing the distress.

You can also prevent it from occurring in the first place. One way to do this is by creating a quiet, orderly home and personal environment.

Here are some suggestions:

- Keep noise levels to a minimum and do not have the television or radio on for background noise.
- Keep the lights low and reduce the amount of clutter.
- Use earplugs and sunglasses.
- Surround yourself with soft fabrics. Cut out scratchy tags.
- Dress in layers so you are able to regulate your temperature.
- Set limits. You can choose to completely avoid crowds and noise, limit your socialization, or only socialize with people you know are supportive.
- Stay within your limits. It is important to get adequate rest. You can handle more sensory input when you are less fatigued.
- Know what food and smells are difficult for you to be around and do your best to avoid them.
Dealing with fibromyalgia

Cognitive/memory strategies
Some people with fibromyalgia may have cognitive or memory difficulties, commonly called “fibrofog.” The brain may feel “cloudy.” Nouns may be briefly forgotten and replaced with “thingy” or “whatchamacallit.” It could have multiple causes:

- The neurotransmitters that serve as messengers between the mind and body may be slowed if there is a lack of serotonin. Depression and headaches can decrease mental sharpness. Sleep deprivation and chronic pain disrupt concentration.
- Hypoglycemia can also be a contributor to “Fibrofog.”

To lessen these difficulties, hot packs, hot tub, or massage may help decrease trigger point pain. Proper diet can help to clear thinking. Whatever the cause, memory compensation strategies will be helpful.

- Exercise and physical activity, even as little as 15 minutes of walking, preferably outside, can be invigorating and can clear thinking.
- If stress is blocking productive thoughts, relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or visualizing yourself relaxing at the beach can be helpful.
- Create a written list of your symptoms, then discuss with your doctor for help in getting the proper medication to lessen undesirable symptoms. Ask your clinician and therapists to give you all instructions in writing.
- Some medications can cause daytime drowsiness or make sleep difficult, so keep working with your clinician to get the best balance.

- Use a timer or alarm watch to help focus attention on a task for a specified period.
- Schedule rest breaks.
- Use a written plan or checklist. If something is important, write it down in order to help remember it. A single system or list is better than several sticky notes can also be helpful.
- Eliminate distractions by making it as quiet as possible, using earplugs if necessary.
- Word games, board games, or any hobby can stimulate mental abilities (in contrast to TV or video games).
- Use association strategies for remembering names or locations. Make a relationship between two items; for example, to remember a name, notice something about the person that relates to his name.
- Try repetition for remembering. Repeat a person’s name or phone number several times to keep it in your memory.
- Use a specific location for items. Put that object, such as your keys or wallet, in the same spot every time in order to quickly retrieve it next time.
Stress management

Stress refers to a physiological response to a stimulus or trigger. This stress response is also called the “fight or flight” response. It gives you a burst of energy to either flight or flee. All of us come into this world prepared by generations of adaptations that help us to respond to threats/stressors in our modern lives.

Imagine you are walking across the street and a speeding car almost hits you. Instantly your nervous system creates the stress response. Your:

- Heart rate increases.
- Blood pressure increases.
- Blood flow to your extremities and vital organs changes.
- Muscles tense.

These changes may be helpful in the short term in order to manage physical danger, but they become unhealthy if they stay activated for too long.

What is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. People may respond differently to the same objective stimulus or trigger. They may be difficult to change (ex: gridlocked traffic). It’s important to realize what you can change is your reactions to stressful stimuli. The challenge to stress is to master not the threat, but your response to each threat.

Each of us can learn to train our bodies how to respond to stress in a less physiologically demanding manner. Everyone can learn to cope differently, and ultimately “better.”

Try some of these suggestions for managing stress:

- Notice when you are tensing muscles, breathing in a shallow/rapid manner, or holding your breath, and change the pattern. Consciously relax or take a deep breath.
- Identify stressful situations, and minimize your exposure. If that’s not always possible, plan a different response or enhance your skill set for dealing with the situation.
- Practice a proper breathing pattern throughout the day even if you are not noticing any symptoms.
- Build skills – get more and better training to perform your job or take parenting or relationship classes.
- Learn when to separate/remove yourself from people, situations, and events that cause stress.
- Get regular exercise (home exercise routine and modified aerobic exercise as tolerated).
- Practice relaxation techniques regularly.
- Get a healthy, balanced diet.
- Improve the quality and amount of your sleep.
Muscle relaxation - Body scan

Progressive muscle relaxation can help you learn more about your body and its tension signals. You may wish to record this exercise so you can just listen and relax.

Spend a few moments being certain that you are as comfortable as you can be.

...Arms at your sides... legs uncrossed... head supported comfortably... move around a bit and take the time to get as comfortable as you can be right now... You may find it less distracting to close your eyes or to focus on a particular item in front of you.

Take a deep breath from your abdomen... let it out very slowly through your mouth and think RELAX... take another deep breath... let it out slowly and think RELAX... You may notice already that your body is starting to calm itself.

To help you learn to recognize tension and then to let it go, it is useful to focus on the various parts of your body... to focus on them and to notice any tension... and then to relax that area.

It is easiest for most people to start with their hands. Think about your right hand or your left hand or both. Notice how it feels... now make a fist... notice the tension in your hand... the next time you exhale, release the fist... let go of the tension and RELAX... Notice the different feelings in your hand(s)... these are the feelings that signal relaxation for you. For some, it is warmth or coolness... heaviness or lightness... whatever these sensations are, they are your signs of relaxation.

Now focus on your forearms... notice any tension. Then relax your arms... just allow yourself to get more and more relaxed. You may be surprised that even when you think your muscles are relaxed that you can learn to relax them even more.

Next focus on your forehead and scalp. Imagine the tension being wiped away by a warm soothing cloth. Take a few moments to feel the tension being wiped away... feel the sensations of relaxation...

Do not rush; take time to let the feelings develop. This is a skill, it requires practice.

Notice any tension in your cheeks or jaw... notice any tension in your neck... let those feelings of relaxation flow down over your face and neck. Each time you exhale, blow away more tension and feel more and more relaxed.
Muscle relaxation - Body scan

Notice any tension or tightness in your shoulders or upper back... One by one, let those muscles relax... if not all of the tension is gone, that is all right... more tension will disappear as you move from muscle group to muscle group and as you get more skillful with relaxation.

Notice any tension in your chest. Blow it away... and relax... Focus on the muscles of your abdomen. Relax. Notice any tension in your back. Let those muscles begin to relax...from your buttocks all the way to your neck... Each time you exhale, RELAX.

Then focus on your legs. Let the bed or chair support your legs and RELAX. Then focus on your ankles and feet... RELAX. Feel those sensations of relaxation moving from muscle to muscle... notice how calm and relaxed you have been able to become.

Remember that relaxation is a skill and that you can become even more skillful with practice... throughout the day, as you notice you are tense or upset, take a deep breath, hold it for a count of three, then exhale through your mouth, blow away tension, and think RELAX.

To return to your normal state of alertness, begin to think of the numbers from 4 to 1... allow just a little more muscle tone and alertness to return with each number as you think 4...3... begin to move your feet and legs and more of your body as you think 2...1.

When you are in a great deal of pain or under much stress, you are likely to need a recording to be able to gain the benefits of the relaxation response. Many people find that if they use the same recording every day, it is no longer effective. If you have 2 or 3 different recordings, you can rotate them or use one until it is no longer effective, then switch to the next one. In 6 months or so, the first recording will usually be effective again. Recordings can be found on kp.org, in libraries, and in many shops.

Tensing and relaxing the individual muscles can be helpful in identifying and releasing tension, but may cause additional pain or fatigue for some. If tension of a muscle group causes pain or fatigue, do not tense this muscle group.
Erase pain

You can find free guided imagery programs at kp.org. They include “A Meditation to help Ease Pain.” You can download the programs or listen to them online.
Managing pain and stiffness

USE OF HEAT AND ICE

Consult with your health care clinician before using cold or heat if you have diabetes, a cardiac or circulatory problem, or an infection in the area of pain.

Either heat or cold may relieve pain by increasing blood flow to the area.

Use of cold

Cold is used to reduce swelling in an area of trauma or inflammation, pain, or a muscle spasm. Cold is often more effective than heat in a new injury (first 48 to 72 hours).

Precautions: Cold should not be used if you have known cold sensitivity such as Raynaud’s disease.

PROCEDURE:

• Use cold for 15 to 20 minutes every 2 hours for the first 3 days after a new injury. Gradually reduce to 1 to 3 times per day for chronic pain. Ice is most effective if it covers about three times the area of the most severe pain. Use cold for at least 3 days before you decide it isn’t effective. Stop use of cold if skin turns white or blotchy.

• Ice usually produces the following sensations: cold, burning, aching, then numb. If you only feel aching, and do not get numbness, then cold is not for you.

• Never use ice for more than 20 minutes at one time. Use of ice beyond 15 to 20 minutes can damage the skin.

• Check skin before and after application of cold. Do not apply cold if skin is broken, white or blotchy, blistered, or if a rash develops.

METHODS:

• Except for ice massage, place a thin cloth or a paper towel between cold item and your skin. You may use an elastic wrap or sleeve (not too tight) to secure the pack in place, and provide gentle compression.

• Use large bags of frozen peas or frozen corn; you may need 3 or 4 bags.

• Dampen a cloth, fold it into desired shape, seal in a plastic bag, and freeze for a flexible cold pack.

• Try an ice massage. Freeze water in small paper cups. Peel back about 1/2 inch of cup and rub or have someone rub the painful area until it is numb (usually 5-7 minutes).
Managing pain and stiffness

Use of heat
Heat may be used to relax a muscle spasm (especially prior to exercising), decrease muscle or joint stiffness, or to ease chronic pain. After the acute injury phase, heat is a good way to increase blood flow to promote healing.

PROCEDURE:
• Use heat for 15 to 20 minutes, as often as every 2 hours. Use of heat beyond 15 to 20 minutes can produce results exactly the opposite of what is desired: causing skin damage or increased swelling. Very low levels of warmth may be used for longer than 20 minutes (heated mattress pad, electric blanket or Therma-care packs).
• Check skin before and after application of heat. Stop use of heat if skin is broken, blistered, or becomes angry red or blotchy red and white.

METHODS:
• Moist heat is generally more beneficial than dry heat.
• Take a warm shower or bath. Be careful of the position of your neck if using a tub.
• Place a warm, damp cloth against the skin under a “hot water bottle.” The hot water bottle should not be filled with water any warmer than safe tap water.
• Use a moist heat pack (may be purchased from medical supply stores) or moistened, microwaveable heat packs (available at some retail stores).
• Try a homemade “heat-sock.” Fill a tube sock halfway with uncooked short grain rice or flax seeds and tie a knot in the top. Microwave until warm, not hot.
• Use a paraffin bath.

Alternating heat and cold
When heat and cold seem to be effective but the effect is not sufficient or does not last long enough, some people find alternating heat and cold useful. Some ways to alternate are:
• Use the technique you usually use for applying heat and for applying cold. But use the cold for 15 to 20 minutes. Wait one hour after removing cold pack then apply heat for 15 to 20 minutes.
• Alternate submerging the sore area in warm (not hot) water for 1 minute and then in cool water from the tap for 1 minute. Continue the contrast bath, alternating for 10 minutes. (Some people find that even shorter times are helpful.)
• Check skin before and after applications. Stop if skin is broken, blistered, angry red, red and white, or white and cold.

TENS
Transcutaneous Electric Nerve Stimulation is a generic term for electronic stimulation used for pain reduction. It most often is applied via surface electrodes.

Manual techniques
Massage or use of direct pressure over a tight muscle can reduce muscle spasms. There are tools that can help to apply pressure in areas that are hard to reach. One such tool is a Thera-Cane (can be found at a Relax Your Back store).

Pain relieving creams or lotions
There are a variety of products on the market that can be support pain relief. They include BioFreeze, Capsaicin, Icy-Hot, and MSM.
Thera Cane

What is a Thera Cane?
Thera Cane is a tool that helps relieve some soft tissue problems, especially trigger points.

It’s design allows you to self-treat your trigger points.

Pressure on a trigger point helps deactivate it, although the exact mechanism is unknown. Most likely, the massaging effect performed using the Thera Cane helps relax the knotted area, normalizing blood flow to the muscle.

What is a trigger point?
Trigger points are tender spots that develop as a result of muscular injuries, strains, or trauma.

When muscles, ligaments, and tendons become weakened, overstretched, or inflamed, tiny tears in the soft tissue can occur. As the tissue heals, it contracts, becoming twisted and knotted.

These knotted fibers restrict the blood supply needed by the muscle. To protect itself from further injury, the muscle “learns” to avoid pain and guards against it by limiting the muscle’s movement. If not treated effectively, a cycle of increasing pain, muscle spasms, and loss of function can occur and develop into a chronic condition.

Where can I purchase a Thera Cane?
• Relax the Back 503-643-1088
  2750 SW Cedar Hills Blvd.
  Beaverton, OR 97005
• Relax the Back 503-624-4820
  The Pointe at Bridgeport
  7144 SW Hazelfern Road
  Tigard, OR 97224
• relaxtheback.com
• theracane.net
  Theracane Central: 1-800-587-1203
• amazon.com
Stretching

**NECK STRETCH 1:**
Start in good posture.
Slowly tilt one ear toward
the same shoulder. Hold
a comfortable stretch
position for 15-30
seconds.

**NECK STRETCH 2:**
Gently grasp wrist on the
side you want to stretch
and pull arm/shoulder
down. Bend head away
from shoulder and hold
for 15-30 seconds.

**LEVATOR STRETCH:**
Turn your head
approximately half way
toward one side. Keep
head turned and drop
stretch the back of your
Stretching

**UPPER BACK STRETCH:**
Clasp hands together and reach arms forward and down as you round your upper back. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**CHEST STRETCH 1:**
With your arms bent at your sides, pull elbows and shoulder blades back to stretch chest. Take deep breaths and hold for 15-30 seconds.

**CHEST STRETCH 2:**
Clasp your hands behind your back and reach arms back and down to open head turned and drop chest. Take deep breaths and hold 15-30 seconds.
Stretching

**CHEST STRETCH 3:**
Brace forearms against the wall in a corner with elbows chest high. Stand in a split step and lean chest toward wall. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**SIDE STRETCH:**
Put your hands on your hips if you can and stand tall. Stay tall as you lean in a split step and lean gently to one side. Take deep breaths and hold for 15-30 seconds.

**SIDE STRETCH 2:**
Reach one arm up while the other is on your hip. With the raised arm reach in a split step and lean up and lean to the opposite side. Take deep breaths and hold 15-30 seconds.
Stretching

LOW BACK STRETCH:
Place your palms on your low back in a supportive position. Gently lean back over your hands. Hold the comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

LOW BACK STRETCH:
(view from behind)

LUMBER TRUNK ROTATION:
Lie on your back with knees bent and feet flat. Gently drop your knees to one side. Hold 15-30 seconds. Return to midline. Repeat to the other side.
KPNW FIBROMYALGIA SELF-CARE STRATEGIES

HELPING YOU LIVE BETTER

Stretching

**KNEE TO CHEST STRETCH (with strap):**
Place a strap behind your thigh, near the knee. Grasp the strap with both hands and gently pull knee toward chest. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**KNEE TO CHEST STRETCH:**
Grasp the front of your lower leg near the knee. Gently pull knee toward your chest. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**KNEE TO OPPOSITE SHOULDER STRETCH:**
Lie with one knee bent and other extended. Grasp bent knee with opposite hand and pull knee toward shoulder (across body). Take deep breaths and hold 15-30 seconds.
Stretching

**BACK EXTENSION STRETCH:**
Place a pillow under your chest and lie on your stomach over the pillow. Hug the pillow with your arms. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**EXTENSION PRESS UP STRETCH:**
Lie on your stomach with your forearms next to your chest. Press with your arms to lift your chest. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**HAMSTRING STRETCH:**
Lie with both knees bent and your hands or a strap behind one thigh. Extend the heel of your supported leg toward the sky. Hold 15-30 seconds.

**HAMSTRING STRETCH:**
Lie with one knee bent and the other extended, your hands or a strap behind one thigh. Extend the heel of your supported leg toward the sky. Hold 15-30 seconds.
Stretching

**SITTING HAMSTRING STRETCH 1:**
Sit near the front of a chair with one leg extended in front of you. Keep your back tall and hinge forward from the hips. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**SITTING HAMSTRING STRETCH 2:**
Sit near the front of a chair with one leg extended in front of you on a small box or ledge. Keep your back tall and hinge forward from the hips. Hold a comfortable stretch position for 15-30 seconds.

**HIP ROTATOR STRETCH:**
Sit near the front of a chair with one ankle crossed over the other knee. Keep your back tall and hinge forward from the hips. Hold 15-30 seconds.
Strengthening

Therapy band can be purchased online. If purchasing a set with different strengths, initially start with the band that has the least resistance, and work your way up.

**SHOULDER EXTERNAL ROTATION:**
Anchor the elastic over a doorknob. With a bent elbow, grasp the elastic with the arm away from the door. Swing forearm from across belly out to side and slowly return. Build up to 15-20 repetitions.

**SHOULDER INTERNAL ROTATION:**
Anchor the elastic over a doorknob. With a bent elbow, grasp the elastic with the arm near the door. Swing forearm from out to side to across your belly and slowly return. Build up to 15-20 repetitions.

**SHOULDER BLADE PINCH:**
Anchor middle of elastic around doorknob. With arms in front of you, grasp one strand of elastic in each hand. Pull both elbows back as if trying to pinch them behind you. Slowly return to start. Build up to 15-20 repetitions.
Raising the bar

Low-to-moderate levels of physical activity will burn calories and provide you with significant health benefits. When beginning a new activity program, this is just about where you want to be. Eventually, as you increase your endurance capability and general fitness level, you’ll want to “raise the bar” a bit.

Raising your heart rate through more intense physical efforts over a longer period of time will provide even greater health benefits.

Begin by building a daily habit of moderate levels of physical activity.

After that, you can begin to think about moving to aerobic conditioning, which involves:

• Raising your heart rate to 50 to 85 percent of its maximum.
• Maintaining this level for 20 minutes or more.

*If you have any health challenges or concerns, speak with your health care clinician before changing your activity program.*

Target heart rate

Target heart rates let you measure your fitness level and monitor your progress. You’ll have to measure your pulse periodically as you exercise and stay within 50 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate. This range is called your target heart rate.

For most healthy people, the American Heart Association recommends an exercise target heart rate ranging from 50 to 85 percent of your maximum heart rate, which is normally calculated as 220 minus your age.

We’ve listed maximum and target heart rates for different age groups. The 10-second count figures result when the target heart rates are divided by 6 — resulting in the number of beats for a 10-second interval.

A 10-second pulse count is an easy way to track your target heart rate while engaged in a physical activity.

• As with resting heart rate, find your pulse on the side of your neck or on your wrist.
• Check your heart rate periodically while exercising.
• Stop and measure for *10 seconds to see if it is within the prescribed range.
• If it’s too high, slow down a bit.
• If it’s too low, kick your activity level up a notch.

### Target heart rate table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Target heart rate 50-85% (beats per minute)</th>
<th>Average maximum heart rate 100% (beats per minute)</th>
<th>10-second count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>100-170</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>17-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>98-166</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>16-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>95-162</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>16-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>93-157</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>16-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>90-153</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>15-26</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>88-149</td>
<td>175</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>85-145</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>14-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>83-140</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>14-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>80-136</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>13-23</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>78-132</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>75-128</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>13-21</td>
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<td>72-123</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td>70-119</td>
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<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>67-114</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>11-19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some medications lower the maximum heart rate. If you are taking a beta-blocker or high blood pressure medication, ask your clinician what your target heart rate should be.

*an alternate method of determining heart rate is to measure your pulse for 6 seconds and add a zero (i.e. pulse of 8 would have have a heart rate of 80).*
Raising the bar

Borg scale
Another way to estimate how hard to work is by using the Borg Scale of Perceived Exertion. The scale – developed by Gunnar A. Borg, a Swedish psychologist – is a description of how you feel while engaging in a physical activity.

Using this scale calls on both the mind and body to rate perception of effort. It measures feelings of effort, strain, discomfort, and/or fatigue experienced during both aerobic and resistance activities.

The Borg scale is especially helpful in monitoring and regulating intensity when heart rate measurement is difficult for some reason or when an individual is on medication that alters normal heart rate response to physical stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Perception of intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Very, very weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Very weak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Weak or light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Somewhat strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Very strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Very, very strong (almost maximum)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The scale is subjective, so remember there are no right or wrong answers. It’s all a matter of how hard you feel you’re working.

The table below is modified from Borg’s original 6-20 scale.

For endurance activities, gradually build up the level to about a 4 (somewhat strong). If you are strength training, work up to 5 (strong) then to 7 (very strong), then higher, while keeping good form for 3 sets of 8-12 repetitions.

Talk/sing test
A very basic gauge of effort is the talk/sing test. If you are still able to sing while you are exercising, you are going a bit too easy. If you are unable to talk, you are going too hard.

Breathing hard is good – even if it doesn’t last for 20 minutes or more. If you are just beginning to work on endurance, don’t worry about the 20 minutes. Start by counting how many times per day you find yourself breathing hard. Set some goals to increase this over time.

At some point, you can work on higher intensity movement for five minutes, then 10 minutes, building up to 20 minutes. Make your own rules – build on smaller successes.

Remember: The important thing is to build a daily movement habit, no matter how easy. Simply moving is good. Think about raising the bar when you are ready – not before.
Aerobic exercise

What is aerobic exercise?
Aerobic exercise is when the body is using oxygen-based metabolism for an extended period of time in a specific “target heart rate zone.” This is usually performed at a moderate effort for an extended period of time.

Why should I exercise aerobically?
Some of the benefits of aerobic exercise include:

1. A stronger heart that is more efficient at pumping blood. This helps you develop a lower resting heart rate and a lower blood pressure.
2. Improved capacity of your lungs to take in oxygen.
3. More efficient distribution and usage of oxygen through your blood vessels.
4. Decreased body fat content, since your body begins to use stored fat for oxygen-based metabolism.
5. Less stress and an overall increased sense of well-being.

How can I exercise aerobically?
There are many ways in which a person can exercise aerobically. Discuss with your clinician or therapist which of the following exercises are best suited to your needs. If you choose walking, jogging, or aerobic dance, be sure you have properly fitted footwear of good quality.

- Walking.
- Jogging.
- Aerobic dance.
- Bicycling.
- Swimming or water aerobics.
- Yoga, Pilates or Tai Chi.
- Low intensity cross-country skiing.

Proper warm up and cool down
It is important to allow your body adequate time to warm up and cool down before and after exercising.

Begin exercise slowly at low intensity to allow your muscles and heart to prepare for more work. Include slow static stretches (no bouncing) of the muscles in your legs and arms, holding a stretch for 15 to 20 seconds. Perform these stretches on your calves, thigh muscles, buttocks, and shoulders.

At the end of your exercise, allow your body to slowly return to normal. This lets your heart and muscles catch up and slowly return to their resting levels of oxygen and blood.
Water walking

Guidelines for pool walking

• **Walk all the way through your foot.** In the water, the tendency is to stay on your tiptoes. If you stay on your tiptoes, your legs don’t get a full work load – only the calves are worked. When walking forward, step heel-to-toe. When walking backward, step toe-to-heel. When jogging or running forward or backward, make sure to press your heels down.

• **Walk (or jog) an equal number of laps forward and backward.** To place equal emphasis on all muscles, you must travel both directions. There is a continual resistance in the water, so you are often using opposing muscle groups while walking a specific direction. To get a full range of motion and work all muscles evenly, walk both directions.

• **While walking to the side, don’t turn around after each length.** You must face the same direction while walking both lengths to work both legs.

• **Include a warm up and cool down in your water walking routine.** To get the most benefit from your water walking workout and to prevent injury or soreness, include a warm up or stretch out prior to heavy walking. If you are going to do an aerobic portion (jogging or using arms out of water), gradually increase your speed or arm movements. For example, take two minutes to stretch before you begin (on the deck or in the shallow water), then start with walking laps, building up marching, then progressing to jogging. Also build up arm movements gradually. When you see your time is almost up, begin slowing down gradually in the last five to seven minutes.

• **Ways to get an aerobic workout by:**
  a. Jogging or running.
  b. Using arms in water for muscular toning and endurance.
  c. Using arms out of water for cardiovascular endurance.
  d. Lifting arms and/or knees higher.

• **Breathe!** Don’t forget to keep your breathing steady and take deep breaths, especially in your cool down period. During a high intensity workout, remember to blow your air out when you exert the most energy – for example, when you lift your knees high. A great way to remember breathing is to walk and talk with a friend.

• **Remember to have fun!**
  You have the freedom to be creative and make all your water walking laps different. It is a great way to stay fit and have a good time.
Exercise equipment

**Stationary recumbent bicycles**

**Advantages:**
- Low impact: decreased jarring through hips, knees and ankles.
- Adjustable resistance and seat position.
- Indoor setting, so can be used year-round.
- Back support is more comfortable.

**Disadvantages:**
- Indoor setting means less change in scenery.

**Stationary upright bicycles**

**Advantages:**
- Low impact.
- Indoor, so can be used year-round.
- Adjustable resistance and seat position.

**Disadvantages:**
- May aggravate neck/upper back if excessive pressure is placed through arms on the handlebars.

**Outdoor bicycles**

**Advantages:**
- Nice to be outdoors, change in scenery.

**Disadvantages:**
- Cannot be used year-round due to weather.

**Treadmill**

**Advantages:**
- Can be used year-round.
- Can change pace and incline (have choice of uphill, downhill and flat terrain).
- Softer and more even surface than sidewalk or street.

**Disadvantages:**
- More impact than bike for lower extremity joints.

**Note:** You can walk indoors in the mall for exercise, too.

**Outdoor walking**

**Advantages:**
- Inexpensive, important to have good pair of walking shoes.
- Varying options of surfaces - track, trail, pavement.
- Being outdoors.

**Disadvantages:**
- More impact to lower extremity joints compared to bike.
- Varying surfaces may not be level or even.

**Elliptical**

**Advantages:**
- Can have choice of using arms or not using arms with the leg movements.
- Using arms will increase cardiac output than just leg movements.
- Low impact on joints.

**Disadvantages:**
- Indoor setting (less scenery change).

**Exercise DVDs and videos**

**Advantages:**
- Convenient and in the house so you can start and stop whenever you like.

**Disadvantages:**
- Poor workout surfaces like not having proper exercise mat.

**Pool**

**Advantages:**
- Least impact for weight bearing joints, can move easier and more free.

**Disadvantages:**
- Must have access to a pool.
Internet resources

- Advocates for Fibromyalgia Funding, Treatment, Education and Research
  affter.org
- American Chronic Pain Association
  theacpa.org
- American Pain Society
  ampainsoc.org
- Arthritis Foundation
  arthritis.org
- CFIDS Association of America
  cfids.org
- Fibrohope.org
  fibrohope.org
- Fibrohugs
  fibrohugs.com
- Fibromyalgia Network
  fmnetnews.com
- FibromyalgiaSupport.com
  fibromyalgiasupport.com
- International MYOPAIN Society
  myopain.org
- MEDLINEplus: Pain
  nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/pain.html
- National Fibromyalgia Association
  fmaware.org
- National Fibromyalgia Partnership
  fmpartnership.org
- National Fibromyalgia Research Association
  nfra.net
- National Headache Foundation
  headaches.org/
- National Institute on Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
  niams.nih.gov
- National Sleep Foundation
  sleepfoundation.org
- Oregon Fibromyalgia Foundation
  myalgia.com
- Pain.com
  pain.com
- Restless Leg Syndrome Foundation
  rls.org
- Yahoo! Health Directory Information about Fibromyalgia
  dir.yahoo.com/Health/Diseases_and_Conditions/Fibromyalgia
Reading material

Fibromyalgia and specific

- *Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia, and Other Invisible Illnesses* by Katrina Berne, Robert M. Bennett, and Daniel L. Peterson.
- *Coping with Fibromyalgia* by Beth Ediger. Foreword by Don L. Goldenberg, MD.
- *Fibromyalgia: An Integrative Approach (The Integrative Health Series)* by Milton Hammerly.
- *Fibromyalgia: Fighting Back* by Bev Spencer. Foreword by Glenn A. McCain, MD.
- *Mayo Clinic on Chronic Pain* by Mayo Clinic.
- *Numb Toes and Aching Soles: Coping with Peripheral Neuropathy (Numb Toes Series, V. 1)* by John A. Senneff.
- *Pain Relief: How to Say No to Acute, Chronic and Cancer Pain* by Cowles, Jane PhD.
- *Taking Charge of Fibromyalgia: Everything You Need to Know to Manage Fibromyalgia, Fifth Edition* by Julie Kelly, Rosalie Devonshire, Thomas J. Romano (Editor).
- *The Fibromyalgia Relief Handbook* by Chet Cunningham.
- *The Fibromyalgia Survivor* by Mark J. Pellegrino.
- *The First Year – Fibromyalgia: An Essential Guide for the Newly Diagnosed (The First Year Series)* by Claudia Craig Marek.
Mind/body health and wellness
- *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy Revised and Updated* by David D. Burns.
- *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness* by Jon Kabat-Zinn.
- *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life* by Martin E. Seligman.
- *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions: Self-Management of Heart Disease, Arthritis, Diabetes, Asthma, Bronchitis, Emphysema, and Others* by Kate Lorig, Halsted Holman, David Sobel, and Diana Laurent.
- *Mind Body Medicine: How to Use Your Mind for Better Health* by Daniel Goleman and Joel Gurin.

Daily meditations
- *The Language of Letting Go (Hazelden Meditation Series)* by Melody Beattie.
- *The Path to Tranquility: Daily Meditations by the Dalai Lama* by Dalai Lama and Renuka Singh.
THE PATH TO BETTER HEALTH

is right at your fingertips.

Start your journey with kp.org, where the information you need is just a click away. Use the following links to access health programs, services, and advice.*

GETTING STARTED

General information
◆ kp.org/newmember – basics for new members
◆ kp.org/myhealthmanager – My Health Manager, your secure online tool for emailing your doctor’s office, making an appointment, refilling prescriptions, and more†
◆ kp.org/memberservices – help to make the most of your membership

Directories
◆ kp.org/facilities – find facilities
◆ kp.org/medicalstaff – find doctors

Complementary & alternative care
◆ kp.org/cam – complementary and alternative care
◆ kp.org/choosehealthy – complementary care services
◆ kp.org/naturalmedicines – herbs, supplements, and other natural products

REFERENCE MATERIALS
■ kp.org/medications – drug encyclopedia
■ kp.org/health – health encyclopedia
■ kp.org/symptoms – symptom checker
■ kp.org/listen – guided imagery audio programs
■ kp.org/watch – health videos
■ kp.org/calculators – tools to help you live better

ESPECIALLY FOR MEN, WOMEN, & FAMILIES
■ kp.org/menshealth – men’s guide to good health
■ kp.org/womenshealth – women’s guide to good health
■ kp.org/pregnancy – health information for expectant parents
■ kp.org/children – health information for children
■ kp.org/kidwisdom – healthy activities and games for children
■ kp.org/childhoodobesity – information and activities for families

These programs contain general health content in print, audio, or video formats.
◆ These programs are more in-depth, interactive, and personalized. They’re for Kaiser Permanente members only.

* Some services not available in all areas.
† To use these secure features for the first time, please register at kp.org, and then sign on with your user ID and password.
Shortcut Web addresses current as of November 2012.
MANAGING ILLNESS

Chronic conditions and illnesses

◆ kp.org/careforyourhealth – online program to manage chronic conditions*
◆ kp.org/allergies – dealing with allergies
◆ kp.org/arthritis – living well with arthritis
◆ kp.org/asthma – tips for managing asthma
◆ kp.org/careforyourback – online program to manage back pain*
◆ kp.org/overcomingdepression – online depression management program*
◆ kp.org/depression – dealing with depression
◆ kp.org/carefordiabetes – online diabetes management program*
◆ kp.org/diabetes – living well with diabetes
◆ kp.org/careforpain – online pain management program*
◆ kp.org/pain – ways to address chronic pain
◆ kp.org/overcominginsomnia – online program to improve your sleep*
◆ kp.org/sleep – information and tools to sleep well
◆ kp.org/cancer – living with cancer
◆ kp.org/hiv – living with HIV/AIDS and other STDs

SPANISH

◆ kp.org/espanol – online content in Spanish
◆ kp.org/vidasana – interactive online wellness programs in Spanish

PREVENTION AND WELLNESS

◆ kp.org/succeed – take a total health assessment
◆ kp.org/classes – health education classes
◆ kp.org/prevention – preventive care
◆ kp.org/healthyliving – tools for living a healthier life
◆ kp.org/healthylifestyles – personalized online wellness programs*
◆ kp.org/colds – preventing and caring for a cold
◆ kp.org/flu – preventing and caring for the flu
◆ kp.org/healthyaging – living well longer
◆ kp.org/fitness – tools for staying active
◆ kp.org/heart – heart health
◆ kp.org/10000steps – pedometer/walking program* †
◆ kp.org/relax – online stress management program*
◆ kp.org/mindbody – ways to gain mind-body balance
◆ kp.org/nourish – online program to improve your nutrition*
◆ kp.org/nutrition – ways to eat for better health
◆ kp.org/farmersmarket – find markets at Kaiser Permanente offices
◆ kp.org/recipes – recipes for good health
◆ kp.org/breathe – online smoking cessation program*
◆ kp.org/quitsmoking – ways to break a tobacco habit
◆ kp.org/balance – online weight management program*
◆ kp.org/weight – ways to achieve a healthy weight

* These interactive programs are personalized to help you meet your health goals.
†10,000 Steps* is a registered trademark of HealthPartners, Inc.

Shortcut Web addresses current as of November 2012.