

The F.I.B.R.O. Factors

Lifestyle Diet

Introduction

by Margy Squires

Given the many symptoms and complexities of fibromyalgia (FMS), is there a diet that will help “ease your pain”? When TyH first opened its doors in 1994, there were few books on fibromyalgia and even less on dietary therapies. A decade and 100 books later, diet is still a scarce mention, despite the many nutritional deficiencies documented by research. What’s more alarming is that many with FMS find themselves gaining 10 to 25 pounds (or more). Is there a diet to address that particular “side effect” of a FMS diagnosis as well?

Is that groaning I hear out there in the reader world? Diet? The first three letters spell d-i-e! With all you deal with (pain, sleep and energy-wise), you can be miserable enough without adding dieting to your to-do list! So I promise to make it simple for you. Each letter in F.I.B.R.O. stands for a diet guideline, with no calorie counting or exercising involved. These guidelines will motivate you to make changes in your *lifestyle*, making a difference in your fibromyalgia and as a side benefit, help you lose weight and be healthier, too. *Lifestyle*. Now, isn't that a better idea than dieting?

F Think **FOOD**, not diet.

The only difference between many diets is the choice of foods that you're “allowed” to eat. Low carb or no carb. High protein or vegan. No matter. We all know that diets don't work so it's time to rethink the idea that any food is off limits. Since the purpose of food is to sustain life, if you don't eat, you die. So the real question is, what kind of life do you want to sustain? For the first time in research history, scientists are seriously looking at the link between disease and foods lacking in certain nutrients. White flour (refortified and enriched) is one common example. When the whole grain is harvested, magnesium and many of the B vitamins are processed out. Think organic and as close to nature as possible. If it's canned, boxed, bottled or bagged, it's processed and you'll need to read the label. The ingredients list should be short and simple with names you can pronounce. The food you eat does matter. Billions of cells die every day and billions more are born. Theoretically, your body is “new” about every seven years. What would happen if you fed those newborns optimum nutrition from day one? My husband, David, chooses to be as healthy as possible with fibromyalgia. In the 20 years we've been married, he's never been overweight, which says something for his choice of foods since he does not exercise either. Two other F words to keep in mind are good **FATS** and **FIBER**, which will be discussed in another article.

I **CAN** do this.

I am the only one who can change, starting with my food choices. Even though you did not choose to get un-well, the decision to eat for wellness is your choice. The old adage that life begins new each day is a good one to start rehearsing. And don't let your physical limitations narrow your focus to what you cannot do. Determine to start where you are. Focus on “one bite, one meal, one day at a time”, as the famous Dr. Phil would advise. *The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting a different result.* Make one change and stick to it. Have an open and willing mind—you'll only do what you think you can and what you want to do. Success with anything starts with the right “I can” attitude.

B **BE AWARE.**

Know your disorder by learning as much as you can about what is going on generally and then individually for yourself, physically and mentally. Education is power. What you know can help you to make personal changes. For instance, stress is a factor that worsens symptoms,



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whether it's caused by mental or physical factors. Mentally, your thoughts play a part by affecting bodily neurochemicals, either positively or negatively.

Physically, food causes toxicity. Many with chronic pain have multiple chemical sensitivities and/or are intolerant to certain foods such as alcohol, MSG, caffeine and aspartame.

(Another reason to read food labels). Part of that sensitivity may be due to gastrointestinal (GI) problems. Digestive woes are a huge part of the FMS complex. You may wish to start with a GI detox to eliminate parasites, yeast overgrowth or to calm down an irritable bowel. Without a healthy GI tract,

you cannot absorb any nutrients—food or supplements—processed through the gut. Without adequate nutrition, you cannot get well. Physically and mentally, being aware of what's going on inside is part of starting “where you are”.

R. REINFORCE with supplements.

I know you've heard that you can get all you need by eating a balanced diet of fats, carbs and proteins but I don't believe it. What's more, many of the leading health researchers don't believe it either. The link between disease and nutritional deficiencies is real. Those who supplement are healthier, live longer and have a lower disease risk than those who do not supplement. And, really, what is the argument here? A supplement does just what it says, *supplements*. The assumption is that you are at least trying to eat a balanced diet and supplement to fill any nutritional gaps you may have. However, many people think that supplements can work miracles, especially the instant kind. Supplements are like food in that they are the building blocks for cells, tissues, organs and help regulate chemical and blood systems. In chronic diseases, many nutrients are compromised or low, causing multiple chemical imbalances which affect how your body functions. For instance, low serotonin increases pain while decreasing sleep and mood. 5-HTP is a precursor to serotonin. Energy is another factor that depends on the B

vitamins and magnesium. Low cellular magnesium affects more than 325 other enzyme reactions. The problem is that in order to compensate for these nutrient abnormalities, you'd have to supplement since eating to get that amount in food is impossible. Energy is also compromised as exercise (which raises mitochondrial function) is difficult when you're in chronic pain. CoQ10 can help increase energy by increasing that function. Finally, a good quality multiple helps supply other missing nutrients such as zinc and selenium.

O. ORGANIZE for success.

Be realistic! Nothing is predictable about fibromyalgia! You have good days and then bad days without warning. There's sometimes a delayed reaction to exercise or stress that shows up three days after the fact. Without an organized plan of action, you're not serious about eating for wellness. And face it, it may take you a month just to get ready to make changes! Rather than going by another off-the-shelf diet book, create your own that matches your symptoms and your lifestyle. Buy a 3-ring binder, paper and divider tabs. For the first couple of weeks, keep a diet diary, writing down everything that you eat every day—as you eat it so you won't forget. The diary will give you a pattern of foods that you are eating

(and not eating!) that can promote or sabotage your nutritional and health status. Include your sleep in the diary as well since research links poor sleep with your next day food choices, e.g., a tendency to reach for high sugar foods for quick energy. Since the purpose of food is to fuel the body, cravings often signal a need. A desire for chocolate may be a sign of low magnesium while an intense craving for sugar may be a clue that you have candida overgrowth. Journaling is a way to see any red flags easier. For your binder sections, headings may be Food Diary, Food Intolerances, Shopping List, Menu Planning, Supplements, and even motivational quotes. Ten dollars buys a 3-hole puncher so you can keep helpful articles, recipes and

information that will keep you on track as well. Start with this article and add the rest of the ones in this series. If this sounds like too much work, it isn't! You'll be surprised how much easier life is with fibro if you're organized!

“Make one change and stick to it. Have an open and willing mind—you'll only do what you think you can and what you want to do. Success with anything starts with the right “I can” attitude.”

Intro Summary

Diet is only one factor to lifestyle wellness. Plus, people often equate diets with losing weight instead of gaining something much more important—a healthier life. You can be a bit overweight and still be healthier than some slimmer babe or dude on the street. It's not about weight. If you're



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making the healthy lifestyle choices, though, you'll find a surprising side benefit is that you'll lose weight anyway. You'll want to read the other articles in this F.I.B.R.O. series, including the S-Factors, fat and fiber for weight loss, reading a food label, etc, for more in-depth explanations.

Finally, fad diets will come and go. Eating for health, on the other hand, never goes out of style. Eating for your own health and lifestyle makes even more sense. *Selah.* To your own self be true.

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- O.** **ORGANIZE** for success.

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