

Fibromyalgia is a condition that typically involves widespread pain. This diagnosis can have many different manifestations. The condition is generally considered to be centered around a heightened sensitivity of the nervous system, especially in the brain. Many people with fibromyalgia experience multiple symptoms including:

- Tiredness
- Trouble sleeping
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Arthritic conditions
- Gastrointestinal conditions

One symptom that most people have in common is generalized pain. This pain can affect many parts of the body, including any part of the arm.

Causes

While the cause of fibromyalgia is not yet fully understood, many theories about the condition include its onset being triggered by different stressors. These triggers may include mental stress, having family members with the condition, and other general medical health problems.

Signs and Symptoms

The main symptom leading to a diagnosis of fibromyalgia is widespread pain. While all-over pain is common, the pain can also be more localized. It can vary in location of the body and may be occasional or constant.

Other symptoms, such as numbness and tingling with

fibromyalgia, may be confused with nerve conditions that affect the arms and hands. Often, the numbness and tingling of fibromyalgia is not to the same degree as we see with other nerve conditions in the arm. It also does not always follow the typical patterns of a nerve in the limb. Therefore, a careful sensory exam is needed to help find the actual cause of hand numbness or tingling. Special nerve testing (EMG/NCV) can help to clarify the causes of the symptoms in the elbow, forearm, or hand and can help determine whether the symptoms are coming from a nerve problem.

There are no common tests, such as x-rays or blood studies, to diagnose fibromyalgia. The diagnosis is made primarily by physical examination and a review of all body symptoms (generalized pain, headaches, anxiety, depression, sleep problems, mental foggy, abdominal problems, etc.). The diagnosis can be confusing because people with fibromyalgia can also have other conditions in the arm which are unrelated to the fibromyalgia diagnosis, such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

Treatment

There are no surgical treatments for fibromyalgia symptoms in the arms or hands, but other conditions present at the same time may benefit from surgical treatment. Arthritis specialists (rheumatologists) may assist with the diagnosis and management of fibromyalgia. They may recommend medications, activity/exercises changes, and other treatments to help with the symptoms of fibromyalgia.