

It hurts all over... fibromyalgia syndrome

Pain near all large and small joints without joint swelling is indicative of the so-called fibromyalgia syndrome. The term fibromyalgia consists of the Greek words "fibros" for fibre, "myos" for muscle, "algia" for pain.

The fibromyalgia syndrome is also called "soft tissue rheumatism". Gradually increasing pain near joints persists without harmful change of the joints themselves.

Do I have rheumatism?

The term fibromyalgia syndrome describes a specific form of the so-called soft tissue rheumatism. There is, as already mentioned, pain near joints, without causing inflammation-based and harmful changes of the joints. The term rheumatism subsumes a large number of symptoms in linguistic usage. These are specifically about 500, which also includes the so-called fibromyalgia syndrome. Generally speaking it can be said for us as patients that the fibromyalgia syndrome is the most common non-inflammatory rheumatic disorder.

Why so much pain?

The pain has its origin, as the word fibromyalgia expresses, in the areas close to joints as well as the ligaments, tendons and muscles which surround the joints. These structures transmit the pain to the nervous system. The cause of this pain is - from a medical point of view - uncertain. But it ought to be mentioned again that this pain does not lead to a harmful change of the joints.

The diversity of the fibromyalgia syndrome

Not only the joints are painful for those patients suffering from fibromyalgia, but there is also a multitude of additional ailments apart from the joints. These are, on the one hand, headaches, ear noises, a feeling of numbness, numbness of hands, deposits of water and liquid during the day, an extreme exhaustibility, tiredness, lack of concentration, but also severe sleeping disturbances. Also ailments of the digestive tract like constipation and diarrhea alternately as well as heart troubles with a feeling of irregular heartbeat can often be observed.

This diversity of symptoms should be the motive to conduct a thorough examination. Please don't be disappointed if all diagnoses are described with the medical term "results negative". It is for your own safety as to be able to rule out for your illness that there is an underlying malignant primary disease. This should also be the basis for you to become better acquainted with your body. Even if many organs were checked, you shouldn't be annoyed with yourself only because of the fact that the results, maybe also including the laboratory tests, were negative.

This text should help you, at this interface between negative diagnosis and medical results on the one hand and your physical condition on the other, to forge a link.

Is the fibromyalgia syndrome an infrequent disorder?

This question can be answered with a clear "no". With a frequency of 5-10 % fibromyalgia belongs to the most common disorders. You can see, you're not alone. This is also important, and therefore the joining of a fibromyalgia support group is a logical consequence, in order for you to not be alone with your health problems.

How is the fibromyalgia syndrome contracted?

The causes of the fibromyalgia syndrome are unknown. Different approaches from a medical point of view are currently being discussed. Apparently a specific kind of sleep and deep sleep, the so-called REM phase, seems to be disturbed. During this phase in sleep a distinct recovery occurs. With fibromyalgia it seems to be significantly too short. One approach is to also employ so-called antidepressant drugs which improve this deep sleep phase. Other causes are to be considered within the context of frequent viral infections but also of a disturbance in hormone levels. These two last mentioned investigations are the subject of different scientific research programs. This is only to show you that also scientific research has been given an impetus by our activities.

Consequences of fibromyalgia

Due to the constant pains and manifold physical symptoms the abilities of the persons affected are reduced. Different studies also showed this. All this makes it necessary for us to advance therapeutically.

How are we advancing therapeutically?

On the one hand by becoming aware of the fact that a variety of troubles can be traced back to the fibromyalgia syndrome. Even if we are unhappy about the fact that several causes have not been found yet, for the moment we should be happy to know that at least all this has a name. The exchange of experiences and instruction on the latest research findings concerning the syndrome also help us. This can best be done in the support group. On the other hand, different drugs like antidepressants - these are non-addictive - are important, to finally get rid of the sleeping disturbances. Other drugs, like vitamins, rare salts, and also a balanced diet can help us. Fitness programs, physiotherapy strategies, which are finely tuned to our needs, are necessary to attain relief. Abrupt or "thorough" massages are to be avoided. Gentle relaxation exercises and carbonic acid bubble baths are beneficial.

Of course this text is only an introduction to the disorder fibromyalgia and it can't answer all your questions at once. But it should help you a little by increasing your awareness of the fact that you are not alone any longer. It should encourage you to join a support group, to begin an exchange of experiences and let you deal with the subject. The additional information supplied by the support group will aid you in these efforts.