


Fibro Flare Kit



CHANGE
HAPPENS
WHEN YOU
DECIDE TO
TAKE
CONTROL

Table of Contents

Introduction	03
<i>What is the Fibromyalgia Association Canada</i>	
What is a Flare?	04-05
<i>How a flare differs from typical fibromyalgia symptoms</i>	
Characteristics of a Flare	06-07
<i>Symptoms of a flare</i>	
What are the Causes	08-09
<i>Ten most common causes of flares</i>	
How to Cope with a Flare?	10-12
<i>Tips for recovering from a flare-up</i>	
A few Good ideas	13
<i>Suggestions to help make life manageable</i>	
Recommendations To Ease Pain	14-20
<i>Products most used by our members</i>	
References	21





Introduction

What is "FAC"?

Fibromyalgia Association Canada (FAC) is a community-based, volunteer organization founded by people with Fibromyalgia, for people with Fibromyalgia, their caregivers, and families.

FAC is a Canadian, federally incorporated non-profit organization. FAC's mission is to build one unified national voice to advocate for fibromyalgia for increased awareness, research, education, and funding. FAC was formed to help improve the quality of life of Canadians living with fibromyalgia.

We hope to accomplish more together, the larger our membership the larger our collective voice. If you are not a member of FAC already, please consider joining at the link below and volunteering with us!

Membership is free to those who have Fibromyalgia, as well as their families, loved ones, and caregivers.

<https://fibrocanada.ca/membership/>



*"Flares are the F-word of
Fibromyalgia."*



WHAT IS A FIBRO FLARE?

Fibromyalgia is a complex syndrome that comes with a wide variety of symptoms. Fibromyalgia is characterized by chronic widespread pain, fatigue, cognitive complaints, poor sleep, and mood difficulties (1).

Unfortunately, managing these symptoms involves a daily balancing act. Imagine the scales of justice, however, the scales are never equal.

Meaning, with fibromyalgia there's no consistency in regards to one's triggers and when one will experience a flare. Everyone is unique in their "fibro".

Regardless of one's pain protocol, self-management, self-care routine, pacing, or regulating that you may practice, "flares", can and will sneak up on you. Flares will send you to bed with more authority and persistence than your parents ever did. Flares are the F-word of Fibromyalgia.

"Sudden increase in symptoms...where everyday tasks become impossible"

A Fibro Flare involves the sudden onset of intense symptoms associated with your fibromyalgia that can last for days to weeks at a time, or longer. This sudden onset of worsening symptoms causes increased pain, fatigue, body aches, and other symptoms.



According to others who have fibromyalgia and experience flares, it is common to have poorer sleep than normal, difficulty thinking, and stomach issues. Most describe a flare as having terrible flu. Some patients describe flares as a sudden increase of symptoms, usually to the point where everyday tasks become impossible (1)



CHARACTERISTICS OF A FLARE

Fibromyalgia Association Canada (FAC) collectively refers to this as a flare. Whatever word you choose to use to describe a flare, and however you choose to cope with a flare are *all personal choices*. FAC will offer some suggestions and recommendations in this Flare Kit to spur your brain-fogged memory, to help when you are experiencing a flare.

Everyone who experiences a flare reports different variations in symptoms; as we are all unique in our fibromyalgia experiences.

Persons with fibromyalgia describe a flare as quite painful and debilitating. Flares can be brief, or last for some time.



SYMPTOMS OF A FLARE

A flare is a period of symptom exacerbation frequently reported by patients suffering from FM (3).

*"Fibro fog"/*brain fog, dizziness,
headaches, migraines, tension headaches,
trouble focusing, difficulty with decision-making,
short-term memory, slurring speech, loss of words,
difficulty finding words, confusion,
sensitivity to noise, light, smells, and temperature

Blurred vision, vision instability, dry eyes, eye pain
swollen lymph glands, and painful nodes
jaw pain and myo-facial pain

Scalp pain, loss of hair, mouth sores,
sore throat, glandular pain

Nausea, diarrhea, constipation, stomach upset,
irritable bowels and bladder
sweats, and temperature control issues
weight loss/gain, skin rashes

Severe joint and muscle pain, morning
stiffness, muscle spasm,
twitches, numbness, tingling,
muscle tightness, inflammation
shoulder and back pain,
mobility issues

Chest pain, costochondritis,
palpitations, flutters

Fatigue & Pain = Flare





WHAT ARE THE CAUSES?

There's no substantive empirical research on Fibromyalgia flares. Persons with fibromyalgia should keep a **Fibro Log** to track their daily activities, symptoms, pain, sleep, and medication. This will, in turn, serve to highlight patterns and/or activities that may trigger a flare. Learning what can trigger or cause a flare-up is an important key in knowing what behaviours to avoid.

This is a brief list of exposures that may trigger a flare:

- Stress; an increase in emotional and/or physical
- Over-exertion
- Poor sleep, changes in sleep
- Weather/Temperature changes
- Medication/treatment changes
- Fighting an infection or an injury
- Traveling
- Hormonal changes
- Surgery/accidents



THE CAUSES CONTINUED...

In a study when participants were asked the most common themes identified as causes were stress, overdoing it, poor sleep, & weather changes (1). Alternatively, other stressors identified included work deadlines, emotional extremes, grief, family concerns, preparing to travel, & holiday stress (1).

The three major are discussed in detail. Let's begin with the theme of "overdoing it" or over-exertion which includes an increase in normal activity patterns i.e. a trip, social events (1). In addition to overdoing activities, when combined with inadequate rest and/or pacing, overdoing activities is known to cause flares.



Difficulty sleeping/poor sleep was another common denominator. The relationship that exists between sleep and fibromyalgia is a vicious cycle. When a patient experiences a flare it impacts their ability to sleep or have restful sleep, further making it more difficult to obtain. And when you don't get enough sleep, that can also be a trigger for a *fibro flare*.

Sudden changes in weather are problematic for a lot of individuals. Most sufferers will experience symptom changes when there are weather fluctuations or barometric air pressure changes. "Drops in barometric pressure, heat, & storms were implicated in development of a flare." (1)

*"What if Pain – like love - is just a place
Brave people visit?"
~Glennon Doyle Melton*



HOW TO COPE WITH A FIBRO FLARE

The following is a list of helpful tips:

- Get a good physician, diagnosis, and treatment plan, including instructions on actions to take during a flare.
- Build a good relationship with your medical care providers and support staff
- Develop a relationship with your Pharmacist and learn about your medication
- Get referred to a pain clinic
- Consider trigger point injections, ketamine treatments, IV therapy
- Rest and sleep as much as possible
- Never assume your symptom is fibromyalgia related. Any changes in health, pain/issues should be explored
- Keep your medications within reach



HOW TO COPE WITH A FIBRO FLARE CONTINUED...

There are a wide variety of strategies used to prevent and manage flares. In Ann Vincent's *Qualitative Study*, participants identified four sub-themes: treatments, rest, avoidance, and waiting for it to pass. (1)

TREATMENTS

In addition to prescription and over-the-counter medications, participants reported using physical therapy, massage, hydrotherapy, heat/cold, gentle exercise/stretching, breathing, meditation, and prayer. (1).



Another subtheme participants mentioned was getting more **REST**, staying in bed, staying at home & pacing activities, scaling down all non-essential activities like social engagements, errands, even major meal preparation until they felt better. Due to the increase in fatigue & pain they lacked the energy to do the activity. (1).

AVOIDANCE during a severe flare is extremely common. Some people in a flare avoid social interactions due to low mood, mood changes and / or because the energy it takes to have social interactions is both emotionally and physically challenging and draining. Avoidance is a protective coping strategy for people in a flare. (1).

WAITING IT OUT

Many others try to ignore the symptoms and/or just try to push through it, some find reminding themselves that flares, like emotions will pass. Some try to tolerate them and cope the best they can as they navigate the increase in pain, fatigue, & other symptoms.

COPING CONTINUED...

What is consistent is that a flare-up of one symptom often aggravates another symptom. A common strategy of importance is that we need to help each other. As Fibromyalgia sufferers we learn to use healthy coping strategies as methods to deal with our flare symptoms.

The very first step would be to start your own **Fibro Flare Log** where you can keep track of the triggers and circumstances surrounding them. Keeping a log is a great way to create a record regarding all of the symptoms that you experience during and leading into a flare, so that you may avoid certain triggers and come to understand, and know how your body experiences this illness.

Opting to learn healthy coping techniques such as attending a support group, studying mindfulness, deep breathing techniques, expressive arts, journaling, meditation, prayer, etc., to learn other ways to cope and break the the isolation.



A FEW GOOD IDEAS!

Here are some suggestions to help make your life more manageable during a flare.



PLAN AHEAD

- Keep your wireless chargers, and electronics together in an organizer nearby
- Keep a few unread books handy
- A pen and paper nearby to write lists for brain fog
- A few activity kits for your children at the ready premade to occupy them with arts and crafts, movies, etc.
- Use a "blister pack" for medication from the pharmacy or a pill organizer. This will help if you can't recall if you did or did not take your dose
- Always have "A To Go Bag" packed when you leave the house that includes things to keep you comfortable

SELF-CARE

- Embrace the art of not pushing yourself to do more.
- Learn to say, "No thank you" to activities and functions when you're worn out
- Have a warm bath and work on relaxing your muscles (Epsom salts)
- A furry friend to keep you company and ease your stress
- Balance is important, knowing when to move and when to rest is the key to pacing
- Save a list of shows on your phone/tv/computer to help you easily find some relax and distraction time



NUTRITION

- Limit caffeine, soft drinks, excessive sugars, and gluten products.
- Keep hydrated
- Avoid heavy meals, eat smaller meals more frequently
- Have some frozen pre-cooked meals prepared ahead of time with cooking instructions attached



PRODUCTS FAC MEMBERS RECOMMEND



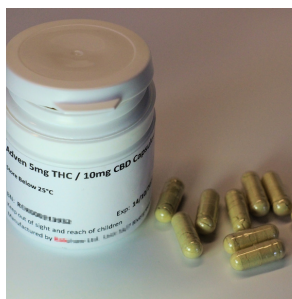
01 PRESCRIPTION
MEDICATION



02 CANNABIS



03 CANNABIS
OILS



04 CANNABIS
PILLS



05 ESSENTIAL
OILS



06 HOME
REMEDIES

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PRODUCTS FAC MEMBERS RECOMMEND



07 MAGNESIUM
SUPPLEMENTS



08 EPSOM SALT
BATH



09 SUPPLEMENTS



10 NECK BEAN BAG



11 HOT WATER
BOTTLE



12 HOT/COLD
EYEMASK

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13 TENS MACHINE



14 HEATING PAD



15 HAND HELD
MASSAGE GUN



16 BACK SUPPORT
BRACE



17 KNEE BRACE



18 K-TAPE
(KINESIOLOGY
TAPE)

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19 FAN



20 COLD PACKS



21 MASSAGE



22 PACING
STRATEGIES



23 REST



24 PERSONAL
INTERESTS/
HOBBIES

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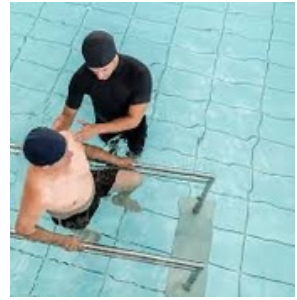
ACTIVITIES FAC MEMBERS RECOMMEND



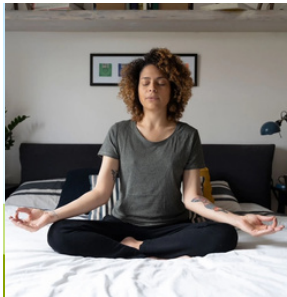
1 PHYSICAL
THERAPY



2 OCCUPATIONAL
THERAPY



3 HYDROTHERAPY
& SWIMMING



4 MEDITATION



5 BREATHING
EXERCISES



6 MINDFULNESS

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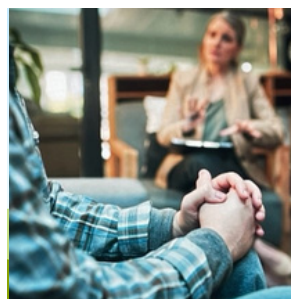
7 VACATION



8 STAY-CATION



9 COMMUNITY
SERVICES



10 COUNSELLING



11 FIBROMYALGIA
SUPPORT
GROUPS



12 COMMUNITY
SUPPORTS/
ATTENDANT
CARE

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ACTIVITIES FAC MEMBERS RECOMMEND



13 EXPRESSIVE ART
THERAPY



14 JOURNALING



15 ART
JOURNALING



16 MUSIC THERAPY



17 THERAPEUTIC
KNITTING



18 PET THERAPY

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