

# Yoga support for fibromyalgia

A gentle 8-pose reset designed around pacing, comfort and fluctuating energy.

Fibromyalgia is a long-term condition associated with widespread pain and tenderness, fatigue, sleep disturbance and difficulties with concentration or memory. Symptoms can fluctuate. Some people also experience headaches, stiffness, sensory sensitivity or symptoms that worsen after doing too much. Gentle movement can be useful for some people, but the aim is not to push through pain.

## A pacing-first approach

On a better day it can be tempting to do much more, followed by a difficult recovery period. Try to keep movement within a level your body can tolerate consistently. Begin with less than you think you 'should' do, pause between movements and use props freely. One or two poses may be enough during a flare.

## The 5-10 minute gentle reset

|   |                        |                  |
|---|------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Seated breathing       | 30-60 sec        |
| 2 | Shoulder rolls         | 4-6 each way     |
| 3 | Seated cat-cow         | 5-8 rounds       |
| 4 | Supported child's pose | 30-60 sec        |
| 5 | Gentle side stretch    | 20 sec each side |
| 6 | Legs on chair          | 1-3 min          |
| 7 | Knees to chest         | 20-40 sec        |
| 8 | Resting pose           | 1-3 min          |

## Safety

Stop if movement causes sharp, new or concerning pain, dizziness, unusual breathlessness or other symptoms that worry you. If you are newly diagnosed, returning after illness or injury, or have another condition affecting exercise, ask an appropriately qualified health professional about suitable activity.

# The eight gentle movements

Keep the range small and comfortable. There is no benefit in forcing a stretch.

## 1. Seated breathing

Sit in a supportive chair with feet resting comfortably. Let the shoulders soften. Notice the breath without trying to make it unusually deep. If focusing on breathing feels uncomfortable, simply notice the support of the chair.

## 2. Shoulder rolls

Slowly lift the shoulders a little, move them back and let them settle. Repeat several times, then change direction. Keep the circles small if the neck or shoulders are sensitive.

## 3. Seated cat-cow

With hands resting on the thighs, gently round the upper back and then return toward a comfortable upright position. The movement can be very small.

## 4. Supported child's pose

Use cushions on a bed, sofa or mat and rest the upper body forward only if comfortable. A seated forward rest over a table or pillows can be used instead.

## 5. Gentle side stretch

From sitting, keep one hand supported and reach the opposite arm slightly upward or across. Avoid pulling. Repeat on the other side.

## 6. Legs on chair

Lie down with the lower legs supported on a chair or sofa so the hips and knees are comfortable. If lying flat is unsuitable, use a reclined position.

## 7. Knees to chest

Lying down, bring one knee toward the body at a time, or both if comfortable. Hold behind the thigh rather than pulling strongly on the shin.

## 8. Resting pose

Lie or recline with cushions supporting any areas that need them. Warmth, quiet or a familiar blanket may help if sensory sensitivity is present.

# Fibromyalgia, flares and everyday movement

The right amount of movement may change from day to day.

## Flare-day version

During a flare, reduce the sequence rather than abandoning movement completely if gentle movement still feels tolerable. You might use seated breathing, two shoulder rolls and a supported rest. If movement makes symptoms clearly worse, rest and seek advice if the change is unusual or persistent.

## Fatigue and post-activity symptoms

Fatigue can make ordinary activities demanding. Consider the total load of the day, not just formal exercise: work, appointments, household tasks, social activity and sensory demands all use energy. Yoga should fit within that wider energy budget.

## Sleep and recovery

Sleep disturbance is common in fibromyalgia. A predictable, low-demand evening routine may help some people wind down, although persistent sleep difficulties deserve appropriate assessment. Choose positions that reduce effort rather than creating another task to complete.

## Sensory considerations

Pain can coexist with sensitivity to sound, light, temperature, touch or clothing. Adapt the environment: lower the lighting, reduce noise, avoid strong scents and choose textures that feel comfortable. There is no single correct yoga environment.

## Before and after check-in

Before: Pain 0-10? Fatigue 0-10? How much have I already done today? What is the smallest useful practice?

After: Did symptoms stay stable, ease or increase? Was the practice the right length? What should I reduce, support or leave out next time?

# Pacing tracker & further support

Look for patterns over time rather than judging a single day.

| Day | Movement | Pain before | Fatigue | After / later response |
|-----|----------|-------------|---------|------------------------|
| Mon |          |             |         |                        |
| Tue |          |             |         |                        |
| Wed |          |             |         |                        |
| Thu |          |             |         |                        |
| Fri |          |             |         |                        |
| Sat |          |             |         |                        |
| Sun |          |             |         |                        |

## Wider support

Fibromyalgia management is usually individual and may include education, gradually adapted physical activity, psychological approaches, sleep support, medicines where appropriate and help with work or daily activities. A physiotherapist or other clinician familiar with persistent pain may help you find an appropriate starting level.

## Sources and further reading

This resource is informed by NHS information on fibromyalgia and physical activity, NICE guidance relevant to chronic primary pain, and evidence reviews examining exercise and mind-body approaches in fibromyalgia. Research suggests that appropriately adapted physical activity can help some people, but responses vary and yoga should not replace individual medical advice.

## A message from Maggie

Living with pain and fatigue can mean constantly having to judge how much is too much. This practice is not about proving what your body can do. It is about giving yourself permission to use support, move less, stop earlier and respond to the body you have today. A tiny practice is still a practice.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Educational wellbeing resource; not medical treatment.