

# Fibromyalgia symptoms improved by lifestyle adjustments

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Short bursts of physical activity can ease fibromyalgia symptoms. Researchers writing in BioMed Central's open access journal *Arthritis Research & Therapy* have shown that encouraging patients to undertake 'Lifestyle Physical Activity' (LPA) can markedly increase the average number of steps taken per day and produce clinically relevant reductions in perceived disability and pain.

Kevin Fontaine, from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, worked with a team of researchers at the Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center campus to investigate the effects of 30 minutes of LPA, five to seven days a week, on physical function, pain and other measures of disability in 84 fibromyalgia patients. He said, "[Fibromyalgia](#) is estimated to occur in 2% of the U.S. general population, affecting about eight times more women than men. Although exercise has been shown to be beneficial, the symptoms often create obstacles that deter many from exercising consistently enough to derive benefits".

LPA involves moderate-intensity [physical activity](#) based around everyday life such as taking the stairs instead of using an elevator, gardening and walking. In this study, participants were taught to perform LPA intense enough to cause heavy breathing, but not so heavily that they could not hold a conversation. During subsequent sessions participants were taught self-monitoring of LPA, goal setting, dealing with symptom flares, problem solving strategies to overcome barriers to being more physically active, as well as instruction in finding new ways to integrate short bouts of LPA into their daily lives.

At the end of the study, the participants randomized to LPA increased their average daily steps by 54%. Compared to the controls, the LPA group also reported significantly less perceived functional deficits and less pain. Speaking about these results, Fontaine said, "The nature of fibromyalgia's symptoms, the body pain and fatigue, make it hard for people with this malady to participate in traditional exercise. We've shown that LPA can help them to get at least a little more physically active, and that this seems to help improve their symptoms".

**More information:** Effects of lifestyle physical activity on perceived symptoms and physical function in adults with fibromyalgia: results of a randomized trial, Kevin R Fontaine, Lora Conn and Daniel J Clauw, *Arthritis Research & Therapy* (in press), [arthritis-research.com/](http://arthritis-research.com/)

Provided by BioMed Central

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