

Achy all over

One of the most common reasons people visit a family physician is diffuse aches and pains. Many times the doctor is unable to arrive at a diagnosis, leaving the both parties frustrated.

Tests

Expect your doctor to order an ESR (Sed Rate). This test does not pinpoint anyone specific disease, but can point to a number of conditions. If the ESR is normal, then a serum alkaline phosphatase level can help exclude liver or certain bone problems.

Here is a list of some common, some uncommon causes of diffuse aches.

- Inflammatory Polyarthritis-this includes rheumatoid and psoriatic arthritis. 5% of those with psoriasis could have the arthritis. Ankylosing spondylitis occurs in young to middle age men, and can be hereditary. All are usually associated with severe morning stiffness, and pain is located in the joints.
- Systemic lupus erythematosus- pain mainly in the joints. Doctor may order an ANA or antinuclear antibodies test.
- Polymyalgia Rheumatica-stiffness in the neck, shoulders, or hip, with morning stiffness and pain in trunk and large muscles. The ESR test will be very elevated. Can be associated with Giant Cell arteritis which is important to diagnose as it can lead to blindness.
- Multiple myeloma and cancer-The only cancer to cause diffuse pain by itself is multiple myeloma. Prostate, lung or breast cancer can move to the bones in late stages. The bones themselves are tender in these conditions.
- Polymyositis- is a condition causing inflammation of the muscles which causes weakness of the trunk muscles. Often the patient can't do a sit-up. A related disorder, dermatomyositis is similar, but accompanied by a skin rash.

- Bone Disease- such as osteomalacia, osteoporosis, and Paget's Disease. All are conditions which weaken the bones, and tend to occur in the elderly. Gastrointestinal surgery, poor dietary habits, and parathyroid gland problems can all affect the bones.
- Osteoarthritis-usually this is limited to a few joints, but in some instances can be a general ache. Also has brief morning stiffness, night pain and pain when the affected joint is moved at its limits. This is probable not as common as Doctors think, and may be over diagnosed.
- Hypothyroidism-besides muscle aches, may be associated with always feeling cold, weight gain, constipation and irregular menses.
- Fibromyalgia-mainly affects women, must have pain above and below the waist, and tenderness in 11 of 18 specific areas on exam. Can be associated with fatigue, depression, insomnia, headaches and irritable bowel.
- HIV/AIDS-can be due to treatment medications or associated arthritis, cancers or infections. A wide variety of symptoms can occur.
- Psychological Disorders-depression. At times it is hard for a doctor to tell if the pain caused the depression or vice-versa.

The pain specialists at **Newport Pain Management** can help with chronic pain and fibromyalgia. Call for an appointment at 949 759-8400. Go to <http://paindx.com/Fibromyalgia.html> for more information about chronic fibromyalgia pain.

Reference: "Diffuse Aches and Pains: A Clinical Approach", Pain Digest (1997) 7:261-265