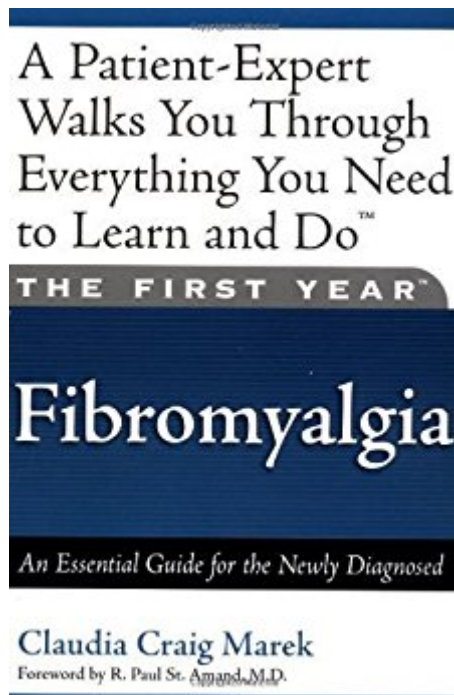




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# The First Year: Fibromyalgia: An Essential Guide For The Newly Diagnosed



## Synopsis

Fibromyalgia affects between three and six million Americans; 80 percent of whom are women; yet remains one of the most difficult conditions to identify and diagnose. In the tradition of the other titles in the First Year series, *The First Year: Fibromyalgia* uses a unique approach; guiding readers through their first seven days following diagnosis, then the next three weeks of their first month, and finally the next eleven months of their first year; to provide answers and advice that will help everyone newly diagnosed with fibromyalgia come to terms with their condition and the lifestyle changes that accompany it. Starting with the day of diagnosis, patient-experts Florence and Marek provide vital information about the nature of fibromyalgia, choosing the right doctors, treatment options, psychological issues, holistic alternatives, self-management strategies, illustrative charts and tables, and much more. *The First Year: Fibromyalgia* will be a supportive and educational resource for everyone who wants to take an active role in the management of their condition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The strength of this book is that it's written by a fibromyalgia sufferer who is also an experienced

therapist and expert from practice. There's nothing more irritating than the glib books, often written by physicians with thriving practices, that casually dispense one prescription after the other--some Prozac, some exercise, some meditation, some organic food--as the "cure" for the condition. Someone with fibro will always encounter those who know what's best for her, or those who judge a "heroic" brief performance as representative of the sufferer's perfectly good health, or those bright and bouncy optimists who praise people with boundless energy, thus letting the fibro sufferer know why praise is not merited in her case, or those wise moralists who constantly point out undeniably tragic cases as a message to the fibro sufferer of how comparatively lucky she is, or those self-preoccupied "normal" types who condescendingly catalog their own problems, translatable as "we all got troubles, just like you". Marek, on the other hand, thoroughly understands and validates the psychology of the patient, ranging from grief and depression over losing what can never be regained to resentment and anger toward those who are "normal" (like the successful, pain-free physician for whom it's "easy" to make any claims about the disease and his patients). She's uncommonly realistic about the disorder, stressing acceptance of a life-long affliction as a key to coping with it and getting the most out of life with what resources you have left. Whatever it's called--fibromyalgia, ibs, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, somatoform disorder (there's a discouraging amount of overlap--the condition is as real, unshakable, undeniable as the loss of a limb, and those who have it can not always make plans for the future, or even be at their best discussing someone else's future at day's end. And while going out for dinner may be within the realm of possibility for someone with fibro, the "price" for doing so can be far greater than any restaurant tab. For this reason, the book, or at least some of its chapters, may be of at least as much value to a spouse or close relation as to the patient herself. Some of the quoted testimonies by those afflicted with the condition practically tell the story by themselves. There are a few caveats. The author promises not to make recommendations since she's not a physician. As a once-assistant to Dr. St. Amand, the chief proponent of the guaifenesin regimen, she briefly presents the approach (without pushing it), but she does take as a scientific "given" its emphasis on pressure and trigger points, mapping the body, etc., when in fact much of this practice and vocabulary is relatively alien even to many physicians who are sympathetic toward patients with the disorder. She's also big on the "hypoglycemic" solution, stressing the avoidance of all sugars (even certain vegetables) and, of course, caffeine and stimulants. Finally, her praise of the computer as a "godsend" may be over hasty, especially in the cases of those who take the path of "virtual" reality at the exclusion of endeavoring to get out into nature and society. Also, she draws far more comfort from the naming of a disease (she explains how "fibromyalgia" didn't "exist" as a recognized

syndrome until as recently as 15 years ago) than would some readers. Let's face it-- a physician can look at his patient and authoritatively pronounce a diagnosis of "chronic fatigue syndrome," "depression," "IBS," "somatoform disorder," "ADHD" or "fibromyalgia"--any number of so-called "functional illnesses"--and some patients will no doubt gain solace from such a definitive-sounding diagnosis. But at their core (or lack of it) these terms are often essentially meaningless, even to the point of being interchangeable. In fact, I wonder if someone who's heard them all might not find it refreshing for a change to meet a doctor who said, "I can't find anything abnormal in the tests. I frankly don't know what's producing your symptoms." (It goes without saying that publishers of books about all the aforementioned taxonomies would not place themselves in this latter category.) In sum, this is a comprehensive if general overview. The organization is a bit misleading, since it doesn't provide a truly useful step by step, month by month regimen or protocol (the date markers are primarily an arbitrary organizing device employed by the author). Nevertheless, for someone who isn't read deeply in the subject, the book is easily recommended as a common-sense introduction to fibromyalgia. The author finishes her introduction with a quote from Wordsworth's "Immortality Ode," the same lines that echo through Natalie Wood's mind (and the soundtrack) at the conclusion of the movie "Splendor in the Grass." Later in the book the author credits the quote to Whitman. At least both poets had two-syllable last names beginning with the same consonant, both wrote in the same century and both spoke English--and it's a great poem, regardless of who gets the credit.

This book is excellent. It gives quite a clear picture of what to look for and expect when dealing with fibromyalgia. It has a lot of helpful information and makes you feel like you're not alone. If you have fibromyalgia you know as well as I do that it's draining and uncomfortable and people will doubt you. It's reassuring to know others are going through the same thing. I thought that the info in this book might be off since it was published in 2006 but it's helpful and on the mark.

I absolutely suggest this book to anyone with Fibromyalgia. I love that it is written by someone who not only has a medical research background but is a fibro patient herself. It discusses many symptoms that I knew I had, but didn't realize it was due to Fibro. I no longer felt "crazy". It's hard to explain, but I almost felt a sense of comfort while reading this book. It is a great recourse that takes you from the first day of diagnosis and thru the days/weeks/month/year to come. It covers everything including about how to come to terms with your diagnosis, lifestyle changes, treatment options, self management strategies, the psychological issues that accompany fibro, how to

introduce this diagnosis and issues that come along with it to your friends and loved ones. And so much more. As someone with Fibromyalgia, its easy to feel alone and isolated as others don't really "get it". But since this is written by someone who also has fibro, her insight and ability to communicate on the different issues is truthful, honest and relatable. Plus it is an easy read, not a difficult "medical" book.

My go to guide on fibromyalgia (even though it's several years old) , it has plenty of relevant information on the disease and how to live with it. I highly recommend this book to the "newly diagnosed and looking for answers person". It is easy to read and understand, w/o being overly technical in it's terminology. I've had this disease all of my life but was hit full force with it at age 43 (I'm 57 now) and I'm still learning about it.

I've been diagnosed with fibro for about 6 yrs now. I have a great deal of denial about this. I kept thinking if I forced myself to suffer through more exercise and just suck up the pain, fatigue, the IC, etc that the fibro would "go away." I've been in a bad flare for a few weeks and I picked up this book. The first fibro book I ever read was "Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Fibromyalgia and Other Invisible Illnesses." This book is not full of technical jargon, it's down to earth and honest. I like how she reinforces the importance of being your own advocate and taking charge of your health. I decided on this book at this time in my life so that as I start to come out of my denial about having fibro and how bad it can be, I can use this book as a new starting point...a guide to handling things more realistically. I would love it if she had a companion workbook for this. It would be awesome.

I got this book after it was recommended to me. I had previously read "What your doctor may not tell you about fibromyalgia" also written with Claudia Craig Marek. This book didn't really offer anything new after reading that, so I would probably suggest reading one or the other and not bothering to get both. However, I do think this is a good book for newly diagnosed or people who suspect they have fibro. I would actually recommend the 'Dummies' book on fibro over this one.

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