



# Living With Fibromyalgia

Fibromyalgia, a chronic pain disorder, affects more than 10 million Americans, but it is not a disorder that many people know a lot about. In an effort to raise awareness, we spoke to two women who deal with Fibromyalgia every day.

## Brenda's Story



Steve & Brenda Willcuts

Brenda Willcuts of Yankton lives a full life. She works as a classified sales rep at the Press & Dakotan. Brenda and her husband, Steve, have a daughter and son-in-law. Brenda is an active collector of all things Coca-Cola, and Brenda has fibromyalgia. Brenda was officially diagnosed with fibromyalgia in 2009 after at least a year of doctor's appointments.

"I would always tell the doctor that I hurt

so bad it felt like my bones ache," she said. "They would do blood tests and find nothing and say, 'You just have arthritis.'" Brenda's doctor put her on arthritis medication which provided no relief for her symptoms.

"It wasn't doing anything for me," she said. "I never had, and still don't have a day that I don't hurt. Some days it's so-so and some it's really bad, but it's always there."

Chronic, widespread body pain is the primary symptom of fibromyalgia, but a variety of other symptoms are common in fibromyalgia patients. The National Fibromyalgia Association says symptoms include: moderate to severe fatigue, sleep disorders, problems with cognitive functioning, IBS, headaches and migraines, anxiety and depression and environmental sensitivities. Symptoms vary in intensity and frequency from person-to-person, and some people may have only one to two symptoms while others may have many.

Eventually, Brenda saw a specialist who diagnosed her with fibromyalgia and prescribed her Lyrica (one of only three medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to treat Fibromyalgia). She was also prescribed Ambien, a sleep aid, to help her rest.

"The part that really gets to me is the trouble sleeping," she said. "I am always tired. I couldn't tell you when the last time I actually slept through the night."

Brenda said she often wakes in the night from pain and has a hard time finding a comfortable position for sleeping.

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