DO FIBROMYALGIA DRUGS ACTUALLY WORK?

FOR MOST PEOPLE, NOT MUCH. HERE IS WHAT TO ASK.

1 in 10 more people got their pain cut in half on duloxetine, milnacipran or pregabalin than on placebo, over 4 to 12 weeks (overview of 21 Cochrane reviews).

Moore et al. · Rheumatology (Oxford) · 2025 [1]

WHAT HAS THE BEST EVIDENCE?

- **Aerobic exercise, started gently**
- **Diet: small, mixed studies**
- **Medication helps some people**

I'll be straight with you: the diet research is weak.

WHAT SHOULD YOU ASK YOUR DOCTOR?

1. **What are the chances this medication will cut my pain at least in half?** [2,1]
2. **How will we decide whether it is working?** [1]
3. **Is there any harm in trying a plant-based diet for a few months while we track my symptoms?** [3,4]
4. **Could aerobic exercise help me, and how should I start?** [5]
5. **What does my medication cost, and is there a generic version?**

87–95% of the time, fibromyalgia drugs failed to cut pain in half vs. placebo, says Dr. Greger, citing a 2013 BMJ analysis.

Greger M. NutritionFacts.org video, 2026 [6]

Work with your doctor, not around them. Never stop a medication on your own.

BOTTOM LINE The drugs help few people, and the diet studies are weak. Exercise has the best case. Ask about it.

MORE OF THE EVIDENCE

- Dr. Greger says in his HOW NOT TO HURT trailer that "fibromyalgia drugs failed 87 to 95 percent of the time to reduce pain by even 50 percent after months of treatment, compared to taking placebo sugar pills." His source is a 2013 BMJ analysis. [6,2]
- A 2025 overview of 21 Cochrane reviews found that duloxetine (Cymbalta), milnacipran (Savella) and pregabalin (Lyrica) cut pain at least in half for about 1 more person in 10 than a placebo did, over 4 to 12 weeks. There was no evidence of benefit beyond six months. [1]
- Small diet studies are mixed. In Finland, people who ate a raw vegan diet for 3 months improved in pain, stiffness and sleep, but the only randomized trial (78 people) found a vegetarian diet barely changed symptoms. [3,4]

Keep in mind: Some people do get real relief from medication. Never stop a medication on your own.

WE TAKE ZERO PRESCRIPTIONS.

That's our choice, not a rule for you. Some prescriptions save lives, like antibiotics for an infection. If you are not changing your diet, stay on the medications your doctor prescribes. If you go plant-based, keep up with your blood work. That way your doctor can safely reduce your medications or take you off them altogether.

I'm not anti-medicine. I'm pro-health.

Don't take my word for any of this. Check it with your favorite AI, read the original studies, then bring them to your doctor.

NOTES FROM MY APPOINTMENT

DATE AND DOCTOR

WHAT WE AGREED TO TRY

WHEN WE WILL RECHECK

SOURCES

[1] Moore A, et al. Rheumatology (Oxford), 2025. Effectiveness of pharmacological therapies for fibromyalgia syndrome in adults: an overview of Cochrane Reviews. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39705187/

[2] Moore A, et al. BMJ, 2013. Expect analgesic failure; pursue analgesic success. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/23645858/

[3] Kaartinen K, et al. Scandinavian Journal of Rheumatology, 2000. Vegan diet alleviates fibromyalgia symptoms. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11093597/

[4] Azad KA, et al. Bangladesh Medical Research Council Bulletin, 2000. Vegetarian diet in the treatment of fibromyalgia. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/11508070/

[5] Bidonde J, et al. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, 2017. Aerobic exercise training for adults with fibromyalgia. https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/28636204/

[6] Greger M. NutritionFacts.org video, 2026. HOW NOT TO HURT Trailer for Dr. Greger's New Book on Chronic Pain Relief. https://nutritionfacts.org/video/how-not-to-hurt-trailer-for-dr-gregers-new-book-on-chronic-pain-relief/

Lex Frasure is not a medical professional. This guide is not medical advice. More free guides: HealthyAgingWithLex.com/questions-for-your-doctor