



The Newsletter for Claimants, Support Persons, and Disability Advocates.



Tips of the Month

Apply:

If you contact SSA with questions before you are ready to apply for benefits, you should request a **"protective filing date."** In many cases, SSA can count this first contact as your "filing date" even though you have not yet filed your application. This may help you get a bit more backpay when/if you finally file (and win) your claim.

Appeal:

If you have been denied for benefits, and you suffer from fibromyalgia, make sure your doctor documents any "fibro . . .

Continued on next page ...

Dear Reader,

People who suffer from an invisible illness often feel very alone because it is hard for friends and family to understand what they cannot see. Please know that you are NOT alone!

God Bless,

Deborah L. Hardin,

Managing Attorney, The Hardin Law Firm, PLC

My Fibro Story

by Schelly Paul, Records Manager
for the disability team at The Hardin Law Firm, PLC

"just" fibromyalgia?

Twenty five-years ago, I had a mystery illness that landed me in bed with fever and myalgias for a week and started a domino effect of other health issues. My ANA tested positive and I had Raynaud's due to working in a somewhat cold environment. This, along with hand pain being one of my chief complaints and hand use being a trigger, led to a roller coaster of diagnosis changes and a litany of tests because I was thought to have something more severe than "just" Fibromyalgia. My Rheumatologist was inexperienced and this was long before it was discovered that, for some people, Fibromyalgia symptoms did extend to the hands.

cluster of other illnesses

My shoulders and lower neck became a mound of severely tense, rock-hard muscles. In addition to the debilitating full-body pain, I had extreme fatigue, significant sleep disturbances, anxiety, and I felt isolated. My illness was invisible. I think some of my co-workers,

Continued on next page ...

Tips of the Month

Continued from page 1.

tender points" in your medical record. If SSA does not see at least 11 of the 18 tender points noted in your medical record, they may not give much credit to your fibromyalgia diagnoses. 🐢

Hearing:

Be prepared to answer this question at your hearing:

"What triggers your pain or flareups? How frequently does this occur?" 🦋

Continued from page 1.

employers and family members doubted its existence.

My depression deepened. I had a long history of allergies, but these quickly worsened and I developed IBS, Endometriosis, Hashimoto's and Interstitial Cystitis. It seems people with Fibromyalgia often acquire a cluster of other illnesses. It was hard to differentiate where one ended and another began.

I was diagnosed with my first duodenal ulcer when I was 7 years old and I have always been extremely sensitive to aspirin or NSAIDs. I was coerced to try one that is "gentler on the stomach", and I ended up covered in hives from head to toe. That was the end of NSAIDs for me.

In addition to the extended use of my hands triggering Fibromyalgia flares that would knock me down for weeks at a time, stress and allergens did as well. I had always been clumsy, but I became more so and each fall also brought an extended flare of symptoms.

food and flare-ups

I first noticed that food was a factor when I struggled to breathe after drinking a diet soda. I had been outside at the time and suspected one of my many outdoor allergy triggers, but as a precaution I stopped aspartame in case it was the soda. I noticed an improvement in my symptoms and the length of my flares and have avoided aspartame since. Shortly after this, one of my sons went through a gluten challenge at the request of his Pediatrician. I decided it would just be easier for my other son and I to remove gluten during the two-week time period as well. I noticed later how much better I had felt. Dramatically better. For the first couple of years after that, I had gluten occasionally and a Fibromyalgia flare inevitably followed.

Many years after being completely gluten free, I visited an Internist who was alarmed at my high C-Reactive protein level. Her first recommendation was to remove gluten. After she realized my levels were that high sans gluten, she recommended going completely grain, dairy and sugar free. This has been a challenge for me to do, honestly. I will admit I do feel better when I (almost) adhere to this.

listen to your body

I try to listen to my body, investigate what might cause or exacerbate symptoms, and be kind to myself about my limits. I also shut out the voices of those that disagree with my personal triggers. Sometimes I literally shut out voices. As both an introvert

Continued on next page...



Visit our online Support Group

Open to:

- Arkansas SSDI/SSI Claimants
- Friends and Family Members
- Other disability advocates

Questions always welcome!

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hardindisability/>

Continued from page 2.

and someone easily overstimulated by noises and lights, I have found I am not only easily triggered by crowds but also by medium-sized gatherings of family or friends that last several hours. I must take frequent breaks no matter what I'm doing and only do short periods of activities involving my hands. Three hours of gripping a steering wheel can knock me out for a week or more. 🦋

Schelly Paul is a mom, homeschool teacher, antiques buff, remedial tutor, special needs caretaker, and cancer survivor. She is also an invaluable member of the disability team at The Hardin Law Firm, PLC.

More Information

To learn more about the SSDI/SSI application or appeals process, visit our website at: www.hardindisability.com, or call us at: (501) 247-1830 🦎



Community Resource: Rx Assist

Having trouble paying for your prescriptions?

Rx Assist Patient Assistance Program Center helps to connect patients with pharmaceutical companies that provide free or reduced-priced medications.

Their website is also a one-stop shop with practical tools, articles, and database of patient assistance resources.

<http://www.rxassist.org/>

Please note: we have not investigated this resource, are not affiliated with them, and do not necessarily endorse this resource. We are just sharing information that we hope will be helpful to you. We welcome all feedback regarding any featured resource. 🦋

We are listening!

If you have requests, suggestions, or submissions for a future issue of the Hardin Disability newsletter, please email: newsletter@thehardinlawfirm.com



We'd love to hear from you! 🦎

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter, please call: (501) 247-1830 or email: newsletter@thehardinlawfirm.com.

The Hardin Law Firm, PLC, PO Box 5096, Cabot, AR 72023