

# MARCH WELLNESS



## INVISIBLE ILLNESSES

Millions of people, mostly women, are living with “invisible” or “hidden” illnesses. These diseases do not present symptoms or ailments that can be seen from the outside.

However, they do affect the person’s ability to carry on with life as usual.

Because those who are affected by invisible illnesses look healthy to others, it often makes it difficult to understand what they are going through. Symptoms that may present themselves are “subjective symptoms”, such as fatigue, headaches and body pain.

In addition to be hidden to others, these types of symptoms also make it difficult to diagnose what is happening. Many of the diseases, such as lupus, can have a variety of symptoms, and the symptoms may not present themselves at the same time. In addition, the symptoms are also applicable for many different medical conditions; therefore, concluding a diagnosis can be frustrating.

Examples of these invisible diseases include: lupus, fibromyalgia, Crohn’s disease, lyme disease and myalgic encephalomyelitis (known as chronic fatigue syndrome).

Since diagnosing invisible illnesses can be tricky, it is helpful for patients to keep a record of their symptoms. Details such as the location of the pain, and circumstances around the pain (such as if symptoms flare up during a cold) can be information that assists in figuring out the illness. In addition, more than one doctor or specialist may be seen. Therefore, it will be helpful to request copies of lab reports and clinical notes from doctor appointments so that every doctor has a more complete picture of the situation.

If you are seeking information on the internet, be aware of misinformation that may be out there. Look for reliable sources, such as information by large medical schools and research universities, or government health sites. Some recommended sources include:

[The Mayo Clinic](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

For more information on this topic, click here: [Invisible Illnesses](#)

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**West Suburban Health Group Website:** [westsuburbanhealth.com](http://westsuburbanhealth.com)

**Health Provider Websites:** Fallon: [fchp.org](http://fchp.org) Harvard Pilgrim: [harvardpilgrim.org](http://harvardpilgrim.org)

Tufts: [tuftshealthplan.com](http://tuftshealthplan.com) Blue Cross Blue Shield: [bluecrossma.com](http://bluecrossma.com)