

GULF NEWS EXCLUSIVE

Fibromyalgia: How Dubai expat beat an enigmatic disease

Lifestyle change, meditation helped Inas Halal free herself from medications

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Inas Halal, 36, faced a relentless adversary in the form of fibromyalgia, an enigmatic form of arthritis, from as early as age 14..

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Dubai: A Syrian expat has battled her way through the dramatic challenges of fibromyalgia, a silent tormentor that wreaked havoc on her life.

Inas Halal, a resilient 36-year-old, faced a relentless adversary in the form of this enigmatic arthritis, which inflicted widespread pain, unrelenting headaches, crippling depression, and a host of other agonising symptoms. Her debilitating condition left her drained, rendering her incapable of maintaining a steady job.

The agonising journey to a diagnosis stretched over a grueling 13 years, as Inas grappled with pain from her teenage years. Test after test yielded no answers; her bloodwork, MRI scans, and X-rays all showed normality when the true torment lurked beneath the surface.

It wasn't until she reached the age of 27 that the elusive fibromyalgia diagnosis finally revealed itself.



Her life was marred by job losses stemming from her debilitating condition. She was imprisoned by an all-encompassing pain that enveloped her joints and the surrounding muscles, while enduring the added torment of debilitating headaches, depression, and stomach and chest pain.”

Fibromyalgia, a cryptic form of arthritis, hides its insidious presence well. Unlike its more conspicuous joint-afflicting counterparts, it evades detection through visual examination or routine blood tests. Inas, however, would soon become intimately acquainted with the relentless agony it wrought.

“It does not show physically on the joints, like other types of arthritis which can be seen by the naked eye and with blood tests,” she told *Gulf News*.

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Her energy plummeted to unprecedented lows.

How she won the battle

But then, a remarkable transformation unfolded. Inas overhauled her lifestyle, embracing a regimen of rigorous physical activity and

meditation.

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Dietary improvements and a disciplined sleep schedule became her allies in the battle. With time and determination, she gradually weaned herself off medications and established daily routines to fend off debilitating flare-ups. She fortified herself with vitamins and strove to keep stress at bay.

In the throes of a flare-up, even the simplest tasks, like taking a shower or managing demanding work on a computer, became Herculean trials. The constant pain led to depression, sullied her interactions with others, and cast a shadow over her life in general.





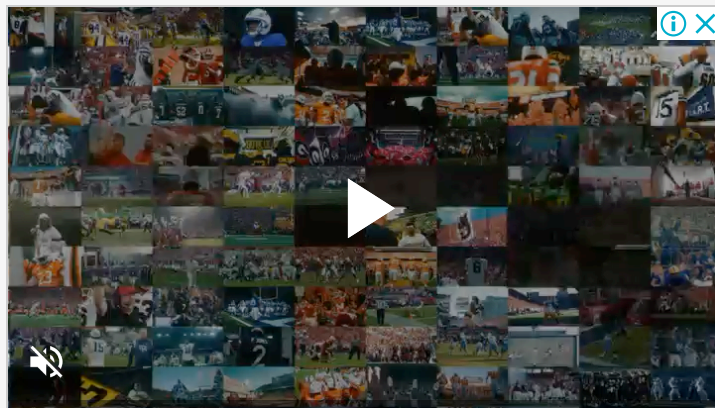
The smile hides the pain: Dietary improvements and a disciplined sleep schedule became her allies in the battle.

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Living with a chronic condition is a relentless challenge, Inas said. She poignantly conveyed the isolation that often accompanies such struggles, as it's nearly impossible for others to fathom the depths of her pain and the daily obstacles it presents. The world can feel confined and uncomprehending when you bear the weight of chronic pain.

“No one feels the pain more than the one going through it,” she said. “You will always feel that no one understands the pain you’re going through or how challenging even the smallest tasks can become. Sometimes you feel like you really cannot live within your circle because no one appreciates the pain one is going through.”

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 **No matter how many people you have**

around you they don't feel the pain in your body like we do. Today I am very proud of the fact that I am living without any medication. I don't have the widespread pain in my body that I used to have in my life 24 hours a day. I want to be able to share my experience and tips to someone else going through what I did."

- Inas Halal, 36, a fibromyalgia sufferer

Support group

Undaunted, Inas now seeks to create a support group for individuals enduring experiences akin to her own. She acknowledges the irreplaceable role of self-reliance in her journey towards recovery. In times of turmoil, family, friends, and doctors offer crucial support, but ultimately, the power to reshape one's life lies within.





Inas Halal: The best support that anyone can have is themselves. Because if you cannot control your mind and if you cannot really take the lead to change your life, no one else can do this for you. For you to change your life no matter how supportive those around you are – the work has to come from you – the person bearing all the pain.

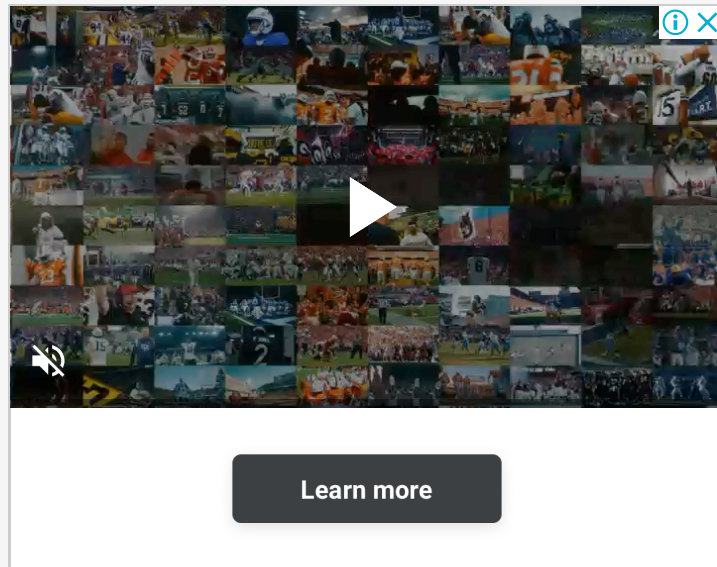
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“No matter how many people you have around you they don’t feel the pain in your body like we do. Today I am very proud of the fact that I am living without any medication. I don’t have the widespread pain in my body that I used to have in my life 24 hours a day. I want to be able to share my experience and tips to someone else going through what I did.”

Inas has recently done a podcast on her life journey and dealing with a chronic disease. The podcast is in Arabic, with an English in the works. In sharing her story through a podcast, Inas hopes to extend her knowledge and experiences to others who confront the challenges of chronic illness. She knows that the most profound transformation

begins with the strength of one's own resolve – the force that can conquer even the most relentless of pains.

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In times of distress, she said, family, friends and doctors are there to help. “But, really, the best support that anyone can have is themselves. Because if you cannot control your mind and if you cannot really take the lead to change your life, no one else can do this for you. For you to change your life no matter how supportive those around you are – the work has to come from you – the person bearing all the pain.”