



What is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome - July 2010

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What is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome?

Chronic Fatigue (CFS) is the onset of prolonged fatigue that does not resolve with bed rest; reduces activity by 50% for up to 6 months. It is made worse by minimal physical or mental exertion. Another name for CFS is Myalgic Encephalitis (ME).

Clinical evidence shows that prior to the onset of ME/CFS, most people experience a physical, mental or emotional stress, trauma or shock of some kind or a gradual build-up of stress to a point where exhaustion occurs. This elicits the fight/flight/freeze adrenal stress response. Initially the adrenals are over-active but eventually become exhausted and under-active. They can then fluctuate between these two states and severe fatigue sets in. The fight/flight/freeze stress response is designed for short-term stress. However, with ME/CFS the stress is generally long term and the response gets into a deeply entrenched pattern/habit that is exhausting, unsustainable and perpetuates the illness.

How do you diagnose CFS?

It is very difficult to diagnose chronic fatigue syndrome. Even experts do not have a clear definition of what chronic fatigue actually is, or what mechanisms in the brain or nervous system are responsible for it. The best diagnostic approach is to determine whether the patient matches the criteria for CFS and to rule out other possible causes of symptoms.

What are the symptoms of CFS?

- A feeling of fatigue (severe tiredness) is the main symptom
- There is a definite time when it began, and not a lifelong feeling of tiredness
- Fatigue is severe, disabling, and affects your physical and mental function
- Fatigue should persist for 6 months or more, and be present 50% of the time
- Other symptoms often occur, especially myalgia (muscle aches), mood and sleep disturbance, can occur - but fatigue is the main symptom
- There should be no other medical reason for fatigue (no heart problems, chest problems, or other medical problems which cause fatigue)

Accompanied by

- Sore throat
- Low grade fever
- Muscle and joint pains
- Emotional stress/depression
- Loss of concentration
- Lymph node swelling
- Headaches
- Nausea and loss of appetite
- Intestinal discomfort
- Sleep disturbances

Other causes

Physical or Psychological factors such as: drugs, chronic inflammation and pain, depression, long-term illness, etc.

Linked to the Epstein Barr Virus - visit Breakspear Medical centre

Member of the herpes family - after exposure remains in the body for life but kept in check if the Immune System (IS) is healthy. If the IS is compromised the virus can become active and disrupt immunity increasing susceptibility to health.

Often exposed to sub clinical attack as a child - symptomless but when it occurs in an adult the symptoms of infectious mononucleosis develops.

A disturbed IS plays a central role:

- Low natural Killer cells (NK).
- Low lymphocytes
- Interferon abnormalities - fights viruses
- Immunological abnormalities: -
- Fibromyalgia (FM) - differences in diagnosis is the requirement of musculoskeletal pain.
- MCS - multiple chemical sensitivities - adverse reactions to various chemicals.

Stress

High levels of stress secrete high levels of cortisol and other corticosteroids - these would normally be needed for general tissue repair and immune regulation but when the body is constantly in an alarm state responding to perceived stress - exhaustion prevails.

Exhaustion maybe caused by the loss of potassium ions and/or depletion of adrenal glucocorticoid steroids - cortisol.

Low potassium - cells are less effective then eventually die.

When cortisol is depleted this will result in low blood glucose - cells do not receive enough glucose and other nutrients to function properly. Organs weaken as long-term stress places a tremendous load on many organ systems - heart, BV, adrenals and Immune system.

Impaired Liver function

Exposure to additives, solvents, pesticides, toxic metals and other toxins stress the Liver - leading to reduction in its ability to detoxify.

Symptoms - depression, malaise, headaches, digestive disturbance, allergies, PMS, constipation, chemical sensitivities.

Impaired Immune function

Fatigue is the body's response to infection because immune cell production occurs during sleep.

Chronic Candida infection

Benign yeast - Candida albicans live in digestive tract/vaginal tract. If abuse of antibiotics, low immune function or intestinal lining is damaged then yeast cells, various toxic by products of yeast enter the general circulation and disrupt body processes - resulting in IS dysfunction, depression, chemical sensitivities, digestive problems, food allergies or other chronic infections.

Food allergies

Chronic fatigue, muscle and joint aches, drowsiness, difficulty concentration, depression and nervousness.

Hypothyroidism

Hormones produced by the thyroid affect every cell in the body - deficiency will cause problems - Depression, weakness, and fatigue.

Hypoglycemia

Due to an imbalance in carbohydrate metabolism, due to high consumption of sugar and refined carbohydrates, thus resulting in low blood glucose - causing depression and fatigue.

Others

- High alcohol & caffeine intake
- Poor quality diet - processed foods. Low in Vegetables/fruit, seeds, nuts, wholegrain, fish, legumes, antioxidants, vitamins/minerals, EFA, mg. P, trans fat, chemical additives.
- Anemia and nutritional disturbances
- Sleep disturbances
- Mental negativity - translates to every cell in the body.

What can I do to help to prevent or reduce the symptoms of CFS?

- Positive mental attitude
- Regular exercise
- Eat whole foods - organic
- Hypoallergenic cleaning produce
- Restrict refined carbohydrates, alcohol, caffeine
- Avoid use of antibiotics, medications and over the counter drugs as much as possible.
- Identify and eliminate food allergens, check the status of your digestive system to see if you are digesting your food properly and absorbing the vitamins/minerals - check out this website for TESTS - Genova Diagnostics
- Health promoting foods - fresh produce fruit, vegetables, whole grains, pulses, nuts, seeds, organic meat and dairy, fish.
- Daily multivitamin/mineral - good quality - especially Vitamin B's
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3-Month Plan

Diet

- Reduce caffeine, alcohol and increase water
- Adopt whole food diet - organic
- Control blood sugar - avoid refined carbohydrates and sugar.
- Eat regularly - 3 healthy main meals and healthy snacks.
- Consider detoxification - medical food product UltraClear - powdered replacement formula - Nutri
- Support digestive system - probiotics/digestive enzymes - Biocare
- Support the Adrenal glands - very good products at Nutri

Supplements

- Good high potency - Multi vitamin
- Vit E - lipid membranes - cell integrity - antioxidant 200-400 iu mixed tocopherals q.d.
- Vit C - potent antiox - regenerates Vit E 7 enhances IS - 500-1000mgs t.i.d
- Thymus extract (glandular) 750mgs of crude polypeptide fraction qd or bid
- Mg citrate - easily absorbed - energy 200-300mg t.i.d
- B5 (pantothenic acid) adrenal hormones, red blood cells, metabolism - energy 250 mg qd.

Herbs

- Siberian ginseng - adrenal function & IS - tincture 10-20 drops x3 daily
- Liquorice - antiviral & adrenals - tincture 2-4ml x 3 daily.

Treat yourself to some reflexology, massage, and aromatherapy! Gentle exercise when possible