



Towards Wellness Centre

Providing Solutions To Complex Chronic Health Conditions

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ME (Myalgic Encephalomyelitis), also known as "Chronic Fatigue Syndrome" and "Tapanui Flu", has been described as an abnormal immune system response to any number of infectious or environmental triggers, causing a long term illness that can result in significant disability. It affects the functions of many body systems, particularly the immune, endocrine and nervous systems.

Gut Bacteria May Hold Clues To Chronic Fatigue Syndrome -

[More info](#)

Note: Always seek advice from a doctor before beginning any listed treatments, medications or supplements.

CFS/ME comes with a wide range of symptoms. Some of the main symptoms include

- Fatigue
- Loss of memory or concentration
- Sore throat
- Swollen glands
- Unexplained muscle pain
- Pain that moves from one joint to another without swelling or redness
- Headache of a new type, pattern or severity
- Unrefreshing sleep
- Extreme exhaustion lasting more than 24 hours after physical or mental exercise

Fatigue

Fatigue is the main symptom of CFS/ME. This is not like a normal feeling of being tired but more a feeling of debilitating exhaustion following physical or mental exercise. This is known as a crash and fatigue from a crash will last a minimum of 24 hours and in some case leaves the sufferer bed bound and in extreme cases unable to perform daily functions such as showering or brushing your teeth.

Bio Medical Solutions

B12 injections: Some patients have had increases in energy by receiving B12 injections. These can only be administered by your doctor.

Pacing: Patients are advised to set manageable daily activity/exercise goals and balance their activity with rest to avoid possible over-doing which may worsen their symptoms. People who can function within their individual limits may then try to gradually increase activity and exercise levels (GET) while maintaining pacing methods. Further information on this is available on the "Towards Wellness Program".

Professional Support: Working with a trained practitioner can assist you to develop skills to calm anxiety and can also equip you with knowledge to find your next steps towards wellness. Please ensure that you find a practitioner who understands how to navigate the territory of complex chronic health conditions.

[More info](#)

Alternative Solutions

D-Ribose: Some patients have had increases in energy by taking D-Ribose. D-Ribose is a unique sugar that supports the body's mitochondrial cycle and helps the the body recycle ATP.

Magnesium: Some patients benefit as supplementation may decrease fatigue, calm nerves, relieve muscle aches and spasms, relieve constipation and is also important for heart health.

Co-Enzyme Q10: CoQ10 is an additional supplement to support the mitochondrial cycle and ATP production. It can be very effective when used in conjunction with D-Ribose.

Acupuncture: Some people find relief from acupuncture. Acupuncture clears any blockages in the body and assists the body to repair and heal itself.

Tai Chi: An ancient martial art/exercise that has been used to help patients.

Mindfulness: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome causes changes to the immune system and makes the nervous system "wired" which leads to fatigue. An excellent "no drugs" way to calm the immune system is through mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness is a set of skills for healing, intuition, insight, calmness, focus, resilience and hope that you can develop to counter the stresses that chronic illness brings. You can literally "train your mind to promote healing. Mindfulness has a positive flow on affect into every aspect of a person's life.

[More info](#)

Towards Wellness
Programme

A programme that incorporates multi lateral strategy to help each patient find their path towards wellness. For more information click here. (coming soon)

Cognitive Dysfunction

CFS sufferers will commonly suffer from slow thinking, memory lapses, cognitive fatigue and poor concentration. This is due to the fact that the brain has sluggish blood flow in sufferers resulting in oxygen shortages to brain cells. In order to improve cognitive dysfunction as well as brain function we must look at improving brain circulation, metabolism, and neurotransmitter release.

Bio Medical Solutions

Oestrogen: The female hormone oestrogen has been shown to improve circulation in the brain. Both soy and linseed have high levels of oestrogen. Females can improve oestrogen via either the contraceptive pill in younger women and hormone replacement therapy.

Calium-channel blockers: Verapamil and Nimodipine, can improve blood circulation. Both these drugs may decrease blood pressure so increase fluid and salt intake whilst using these.

Neurotransmitter drugs: Such as gabapentin can improve abnormal brain function in cfs. They slow down electrical activity which helps cfs patients as too much electrical activity is responsible for many cfs symptoms.

Alternative Solutions

Mindfulness: is a set of skills for healing, intuition, insight, calmness, focus, resilience and hope that you can develop to counter the stresses that chronic illness brings. You can literally "train your mind to promote healing. Mindfulness has a positive flow on affect into every aspect of a person's life. [More info](#)

Sleep management: Healthy sleep is very important for good brain function, refer under the symptom guide for "sleep" below.

Brain activities: Exercising the brain is important for cfs patients and the phrase "use it or lose it" is applicable to the brain. Study, puzzles or art are great ways to exercise the brain.

Salt and fluid: extra salt and fluids will increase blood volume and increase brain circulation.

B12: Some cfs patients have low B12 levels in their cerebrospinal fluid, B12 supplementation through sublingual methylcobalamin b12 vitamins or b12 injections as above are effective.

Omega 3: Rich fish oil has been proven to benefit brain function and is available in supplement form.

Ginkgo: is a herb which dilates blood vessels, hence improving brain blood flow. As with all supplements please check with your doctor if this supplement is suitable for you.

Muscle Pain

For information on muscle and connective tissue pain, refer to our section on Fibromyalgia here

[More info](#)

For information on joint pain, refer to our section on Arthritis here

[More info](#)

Headaches

Most people with CFS will suffer from headaches at some point in their journey. They may be due to brain or skull structure, or due to infections and inflammation, but the most common cause of headaches is stress. It is important to see your doctor if you experience headaches of a new or more severe nature.

Bio Medical Solutions

Painkillers: Such as paracetamol can provide temporary symptom relief.

Tricyclics: Such as Amitriptyline, Nortriptyline and Doxepin are old style antidepressants which may be used to improve sleep and also give symptom relief for headaches.

Anti-migraine: drugs are available to provide relief. Unfortunately people with CFS are often very sensitive to medication so always start on slow dosages.

Alternative Solutions

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is a strategy that has many health benefits including controlling pain. [More info](#)

Acupuncture and acupressure: Have been used in china for years to help relieve pain and poor circulation.

The cold approach: Headaches can be sometimes be relieved by going for a cold swim or putting a cold crystal band around the head. The coldness shrinks the blood vessels and relieves pain and pressure.

Willow bark: can relieve pain as well as aspirin. It contains the same ingredient as aspirin so those sensitive to aspirin and those with sensitive stomachs should avoid.

Poor Sleep

Most people with CFS struggle with sleep either struggling to get to sleep or waking up multiple times during their slumber, because of this, sleep is rarely refreshing and healing. Fortunately there are many strategies that we are able to implement to enhance our sleep.

Bio Medical Solutions

Tricyclics: Such as Amitriptyline, Nortriptyline and Doxepin are old style antidepressants which may be used to improve sleep and also give symptom relief for headaches.

Melatonin (1-6mg): Melatonin is excellent for helping people to fall asleep and is popular with shift workers for this reason. It may be used in conjunction with Tricyclics. It can cause some to feel groggy the next morning.

Antihistamines: like promethazine can have good sedating properties and are also beneficial for those with allergies and sinus issues. They are non addictive but can also leave you feeling groggy the next morning.

Orphenadrine: is a muscle relaxant and helps with night cramps, spasms, muscle pain and twitching.

Ropinirole: can help relieve restless legs syndrome.

Quetiapine: is a mood disorder medication however at very low doses it has helped ME/CFS patients with sleep issues.

Alternative Solutions

Environment improvements: It is important to be comfortable, have the right temperature, be quiet and be really dark. Before looking at any sleep medication, ensure you have the basics right first.

Lifestyle: Reducing stress levels is important and mindfulness can help with this. Avoiding alcohol, too much sugar and caffeine in the late evening is paramount to a good slumber. Exposure to sunlight during the day prepares the body for melatonin release at the right times which will help you fall asleep

Natural approaches: Progressive relaxation techniques, soft music, massage and warm baths can all help. Chamomile tea has been proven to be effective with relaxation.

Magnesium: and calcium supplements can relieve night cramps if these are a barrier to getting a good nights rest.

5-HTP: Over the counter 5-HTP helps some as does hot milk which contains the same ingredient.

Protein before bed: Eating a protein snack (eggs, milk or nuts) or having a protein shake before bed helps regulate blood sugar levels throughout the night and helps promote good quality sleep.

Poor Digestion

A common issue with CFS patients is IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome) and can include cramps, wind, pain, vomiting, bloating, irregular bowel movements and undigested food. This issue may be caused from chronic bowel infection, food allergies/food sensitivities, bacterial imbalance, stress, medication or an overactive immune system.

Bio Medical Solutions

Losec: is a drug that works by slowing down acid production in the stomach to relieve stomach pain.

Trycyls: Low doses of amitriptyline or nortriptyline can improve sleep quality and also aid with pain management so these drugs are a good option for those suffering from IBS.

Alternative Solutions

Diet: Eat little and eat often. Ensure your diet has variety. Avoid foods that aggravate, you may need to keep a food diary to identify food sensitivities. Do not drink too much with meals. Eat a small protein snack at bed time.

Stress management: Reducing stress levels is important and mindfulness can help with this. Hypnosis is useful for soothing IBS, pain and nausea. Counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy are helpful for many with stomach issues. Sleep can really help (refer sleep section above).

Probiotics: They increase the numbers of healthy bacteria that live in the gut while decreasing the unhealthy bacteria. They improve the ability of the gut wall to act as a barrier to keep unwanted compounds out of the body. They decrease your body's own production of inflammation-producing compounds, lowering inflammation in the gut and throughout the body

Anxiety

Illness puts both emotional and physical stress on the body and often accompanying this stress comes a feeling of anxiety. Anxiety can express itself as feelings of fear or terror and you may also experience panic attacks (heart palpitations, shortness of breath, chest pain).

Bio Medical Solutions

SSRI's (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors): Such as Citalopram and Paroxetine may be used to increase serotonin levels and relieve anxiety to some extent. It is important to note that many people feel worse before they feel better on SSRI's and those with CFS can experience mild to severe side effects in the beginning stages of this medication. Discuss in length with a GP that has experience with CFS patients taking SSRI's before beginning these medications.

Benzodiazepines: Such as Lorazepam and Xanax are drugs that slow your central nervous system (CNS) and provide a tranquilizing effect. This calming result can help you manage anxiety and nervousness. Both of these drugs are powerful medications and potentially addictive so are only prescribed for short-term use. They are often used when a patient is beginning SSRI's to relieve the potential increased anxiety from starting the SSRI's.

Alternative Solutions

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is a strategy that has many health benefits including controlling anxiety. Mindfulness is a set of skills for healing, intuition, insight, calmness, focus, resilience and hope that you can develop to counter the stresses that chronic illness brings. You can literally "train your mind to promote healing. Mindfulness has a positive flow on affect into every aspect of a person's life. [More info](#)

Music: Everyone has individual music tastes but slow soothing music can promote feelings of relaxation which help relieve anxiety.

Yoga & Taichi: promote good breathing, mental calm and gentle exercise. It is important to start slowly and pace yourself accordingly.

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy: Are techniques that help us identify when we have negative thought patterns and replace these negative thoughts with positive ones.

Pain

In most cases of CFS/ME some form of pain will be experienced at some point. These pains include joint pain, muscular pain, headaches, gastrointestinal, bladder, menstrual and lymph gland pain too. Widespread muscle and connective tissue pain is known as Fibromyalgia - more information on Fibromyalgia here - [More info](#)

Bio Medical Solutions

Analgesics: Such as paracetamol or aspirin work best for localised pain. For more serious pain there is codeine and tramadol. For very severe pain prescription drugs include morphine, oxycodone and pethidine.

NSAIDs: work by reducing inflammation. Diclofenac, ibuprofen and naproxen are good for sprains, strains, infection related pain and joint pain associated with arthritis. These medications can be quite harsh on the stomach and many

CFS/ME patients cope with a subsidiary medication known as COX-2 inhibitors such as celecoxib.

Anticonvulsants: such as carbamazepine and sodium valproate are drugs intended for chronic pain which decrease `electric impulses` and decrease our experience of pain. The dose needs to be built up gradually over time and initially you may experience side effects however most of these go away with time. As with any medication, discuss with your doctor.

Alternative Solutions

Mindfulness: Mindfulness is a strategy that has many health benefits including controlling pain.

[More info](#)

Acupuncture and Hypnosis: Are methods that have been proven to relieve pain in some individuals.

Willow Bark: A natural painkiller that contains the same active ingredient as aspirin. Avoid if you have an aspirin sensitivity.

Omega 3 Fish Oils: Help to block inflammatory cytokines, and may give pain relief to some.

Olive Oil: Contains similar properties to ibuprofen.

Capsicum Cream: Can be used for localised joint or muscle pain. Use carefully and avoid broken skin as it can burn.

There is no one specific test to diagnose CFS/ME so in order for a diagnosis to be made, tests must be undertaken to confirm that nothing else is the cause of the ME symptoms. It is also pertinent to do symptom specific tests, for instance if the patient has liver related symptoms then the doctor may wish to do additional liver tests such as an ultrasound etc.

A good guide for preliminary tests to help with a CFS diagnosis

- Full blood count and differential
- Erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and C-reactive protein (CRP)
- Iron studies
- Vitamin B12, Folate
- Vitamin D
- Routine biochemistry (urea, electrolytes, calcium, glucose)
- Liver function
- Renal function
- Thyroid function
- Creatine kinase
- Morning cortisol
- Urinalysis

Disclaimer: Information and advice shared by the Towards Wellness Centre is of a general nature and is not intended to replace qualified medical advice. The Towards Wellness Centre does not accept responsibility for any actions or treatments undertaken.