

UniversityHealthServices

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Chronic Fatigue

Why Am I Tired all the Time?

- Have you been tired (fatigued) for a long time--more than six months--even though you are getting enough rest and are not working too hard?
- Has your doctor been unable to find illnesses that could explain your symptoms?
- Are you able to do less than half of what you used to, because you feel tired?
- Have you had recurrent or persistent problems for six months or more with any of the signs and symptoms listed below?
 - Mild fever or chills
 - Sore throat
 - Unexplained muscle aches or weakness
 - Headaches that are different from the kind you usually get, or headaches that make your whole head hurt
 - Confusion
 - Trouble thinking and concentrating
 - Feeling very tired for more than 24 hours after exercise that didn't bother you before
 - Trouble sleeping.

If you have any of the above symptoms, you may have Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS).

What Causes CFIDS?

No one is certain about what causes CFIDS. The symptoms of CFIDS may be caused by an immune system that isn't working well. Or CFIDS may be caused by some kind of virus. Researchers are looking for the cause of CFIDS.

How is CFIDS treated?

The first step is to see if there is a medical cause for your fatigue. Your doctor will probably want to review your symptoms and medical history, and give you a physical examination. Your doctor may also want to do some blood tests, but laboratory testing is not often helpful. Some of the symptoms, such as muscle aches, sleep problems, anxiety and depression, can be treated with medicine. The medicine is intended only to reduce your symptoms and allow you to be more active, not to cure the fatigue. So far, there is no medicine that "cures" the entire syndrome. Most patients improve with time. Meanwhile, there are things you can do to improve your outlook and your ability to function.

- Keep a daily diary to identify times when you have the most energy. Plan your activities for the times you have the most energy.
- Keep up some level of activity and exercise, within your abilities. Your doctor can help you plan an appropriate exercise program to maintain your strength at whatever level is possible. Exercise can help your body and your mind.
- Give yourself "permission" to recognize and express your feelings, such as sadness, anger and frustration. You need to grieve for the energy you have lost.
- Emotional support is important in coping with a chronic health problem. Ask for support from family and friends. Look for support groups or counseling in your community. Your doctor is another important source of help.

What should I do about not being able to think clearly or remember things the way I used to?

Memory and concentration are often affected by chronic fatigue. You can cope by keeping lists and making notes to remind yourself of important things. Also, give yourself more time to do things that take concentration. If possible, do these things at the time of day when your energy level is highest. Medicine may also help you sleep better, which might improve your memory and concentration.

What can I expect from my doctor? Your doctor can work with you to provide symptom relief and to help you find ways of coping with the changes CFIDS makes in your life. Chronic fatigue affects you physically, emotionally and socially. When you address all of these factors, you have the best chance of adjusting to your illness and feeling more satisfied with your life.

If you have CFIDS, a good long-term relationship with your doctor helps. This relationship is the key that helps you feel less frustrated.

Where can I get more information about CFIDS?

More information is available through these groups:

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Society
10 Wild Partridge Ct.
Greensboro, NC 27455
800-597-4237

Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction
Syndrome Association of America
P.O. Box 220398 Charlotte, NC 28222
800-442-3437
(24-hour number)

National Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and
Fibromyalgia Association
3521 Broadway, Suite 222
Kansas City, MO 64111
816-931-4777
(24-hour number)

The Massachusetts Chronic Fatigue and
Immune Dysfunction Association, Inc.
808 Main St.
Waltham, MA 02154
617-893-4415

Please Read!!!

If you develop any new, prolonged, or more severe symptoms of your illness, call the nurse at 863-4463, return or consult your personal clinician. If University Health Services is closed, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call 911 for an ambulance.

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774

For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at www.sa.psu.edu/uhs

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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