



## HEALTH INFORMATION

# Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

## What is chronic fatigue syndrome?

**Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is also known as Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) or Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome (PVFS), is a range of conditions that cause symptoms which interfere with a person's daily life.**

CFS/ME is a genuine long-term debilitating condition; however there is uncertainty around the causes and symptoms people have as they vary so widely. It can happen after an infection, or less commonly after trauma such as an accident or operation. It is more common in women than men and more likely as you get older. It can affect children; although unlikely under the age of 10, it is usually children between 13-15 years old. Around 250,000 people in the UK have CFS/ME. Symptoms can vary from mild to severe.

It is thought doctors don't fully understand what causes CFS/ME. There are several theories to explain CFS/ME, for example, it could be linked to disorders of your immune system (which helps your body fight infection) or your hormonal system. The Department of Health (DoH) suggests that until more research is carried out, it may be best to think of CFS/ME as a range of conditions that are triggered by different factors in people who have an underlying disposition.

There are no specific tests for CFS/ME and your GP will rule out other medical conditions first.

## What are the symptoms?

CFS/ME causes extreme tiredness that is different from the normal tiredness that everyone experiences. It makes you less able to cope with levels of activity that were previously normal for you in your work, school or social life.

Even taking a shower can make you feel exhausted. Common symptoms of CFS/ME, which can happen 24-48 hours after mental or physical activity include:-

- Fatigue that lasts more than 24 hours to a level that you used to be able to manage without feeling tired
- Muscle and joint pain
- Painful glands in your neck or armpits
- A sore throat and headaches
- Forgetfulness, memory loss, confusion or difficulty concentrating
- Sleep disturbances – waking up feeling tired or unrested or even having trouble getting to sleep
- Flu-like symptoms
- Palpitations (feeling like your heartbeat is thumping through your chest)
- Dizziness
- Sweating
- Problems with your balance
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS) symptoms such as constipation or diarrhoea and bloating
- Over time, you may or may not become depressed or have mood swings
- Paleness
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating





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## What is the treatment?

Treatment for CFS/ME aims to manage your symptoms. Treatment depends on your specific symptoms – there is no single treatment that works for everyone. Your GP or specialist should review your treatment regularly.

He or she may recommend one or more of the following treatment options.

- Self-Help
- Medicines
- Talking Therapies – Cognitive Behavioural Therapies
- Physical Therapies – Graded Exercise Therapy (GET)
- Complementary Therapies

CFS/ME affects people differently. Many people find their symptoms improve over time and some recover completely.

## Further Information

**The National ME Centre,**  
**Telephone: 01708-378050**

**Web Page: [www.nmec.org.uk](http://www.nmec.org.uk)**

**E-mail: [nmecent@aol.com](mailto:nmecent@aol.com)**