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Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Also called: CFS, ME/CFS, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis, SEID, Systemic Exertion Intolerance Disease

What is chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)?

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a serious, long-term illness that affects many body systems. Another name for it is myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS). CFS can often make you unable to do your usual activities. Sometimes you may not even be able to get out of bed.

What causes chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)?

The cause of CFS is unknown. There may be more than one thing that causes it. It is possible that two or more triggers might work together to cause the illness.

Who is at risk for chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)?

Anyone can get CFS, but it is most common in people between 40 and 60 years old. Adult women have it more often than adult men. Whites are more likely than other races to get a diagnosis of CFS, but many people with CFS have not been diagnosed with it.

What are the symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)?

CFS symptoms can include

- Severe fatigue that is not improved by rest
- Sleep problems [<https://medlineplus.gov/sleepdisorders.html>]
- Post-exertional malaise (PEM), where your symptoms get worse after any physical or mental activity
- Problems with thinking and concentrating
- Pain [<https://medlineplus.gov/chronicpain.html>]
- Dizziness [<https://medlineplus.gov/dizzinessandvertigo.html>]

CFS can be unpredictable. Your symptoms may come and go. They may change over time – sometimes they might get better, and other times they may get worse.

How is chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) diagnosed?

CFS can be difficult to diagnose. There is no specific test for CFS, and other illnesses can cause similar symptoms. Your health care provider has to rule out other diseases before making a diagnosis of CFS. He or she will do a thorough medical exam, including

- Asking about your medical history and your family's medical history
- Asking about your current illness, including your symptoms. Your doctor will want to know how often you have symptoms, how bad they are, how long they have lasted, and how they affect your life.
- A thorough physical and mental status exam
- Blood, urine, or other tests

What are the treatments for chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)?

There is no cure or approved treatment for CFS, but you may be able to treat or manage some of your symptoms. You, your family, and your health care provider should work together to decide on a plan. You should figure out which symptom causes the most problems and try to treat that first. For example, if sleep problems affect you the most, you might first try using good sleep habits [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html>] . If those do not help, you may need to take medicines or see a sleep specialist.

Strategies such as learning new ways to manage activity can also be helpful. You need to make sure that you do not "push and crash." This can happen when you feel better, do too much, and then get worse again.

Since the process of developing a treatment plan and attending to self-care can be hard if you have CFS, it is important to have support from family members and friends.

Don't try any new treatments without talking to your health care provider. Some treatments that are promoted as cures for CFS are unproven, often costly, and could be dangerous.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Start Here

- **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome** [<https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/chronic-fatigue-syndrome>]
(Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)
- **Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: What is ME/CFS?** [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/about/index.html>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/acerca-de/que-es-emsfc.html>]

Symptoms

- **Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Symptoms** [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/symptoms-diagnosis/symptoms.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/sintomas-diagnostico/sintomas.html>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- **Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Diagnosis** [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/symptoms-diagnosis/diagnosis.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/sintomas-diagnostico/diagnostico.html>]

Treatments and Therapies

- **Are There Any Natural Remedies that Reduce Chronic Fatigue Associated with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome?** [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chronic-fatigue-syndrome/expert-answers/chronic-fatigue/faq-20058033?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es-es/diseases-conditions/chronic-fatigue-syndrome/expert-answers/chronic-fatigue/faq-20058033?p=1>]
- **Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Treatment** [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/treatment/index.html>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/tratamiento/index.html>]

Related Issues

- **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in Gulf War Veterans** [<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/chronic-fatigue-syndrome.asp>] (Department of Veterans Affairs)
- **Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Possible Causes** [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/about/possible-causes.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/acerca-de/causas.html>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Fatigue Syndrome, Chronic
[<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search/open/condition=%22Fatigue+Syndrome,+Chronic%22>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Association between quadrivalent human papillomavirus vaccination and selected syndromes with autonomic...
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32878745>]
- Article: Chronic fatigue in myelodysplastic syndromes: Looking beyond anemia.
[<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32739782>]
- Article: Chronic fatigue syndrome: progress and possibilities. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/32248536>]
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome -- see more articles [[https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=fatigue+syndrome,chronic\[mh\]+AND+humans\[mh\]+AND+english\[la\]+AND+\(review\[pt\]+OR+guideline\[pt\]+OR+clinical+trial\[pt\]+OR+jsubsetk\[text\]+OR+jsubsetn\[text\]+OR+jsubsetaim\[text\]+OR+patient+education+handout\[pt\]\)+NOT+\(letter\[pt\]+OR+editorial\[pt\]\)+AND+%22last+2+Years%22\[edat\]](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=fatigue+syndrome,chronic[mh]+AND+humans[mh]+AND+english[la]+AND+(review[pt]+OR+guideline[pt]+OR+clinical+trial[pt]+OR+jsubsetk[text]+OR+jsubsetn[text]+OR+jsubsetaim[text]+OR+patient+education+handout[pt])+NOT+(letter[pt]+OR+editorial[pt])+AND+%22last+2+Years%22[edat])]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]

Children

- ME/CFS in Children: Fact Sheet for Parents/Guardians [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/me-cfs-children/factsheet-parents-guardians.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/ninos/hoja-informativa-para-padres-tutores.html>]
- Symptoms and Diagnosis of ME/CFS in Children [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/me-cfs-children/children-symptoms-diagnosis.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/es/ninos/sintomas-diagnostico-en-los-ninos.html>]
- Treatment of ME/CFS in Children [<https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/me-cfs-children/children-treatment.html>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Teenagers

- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/cfs.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/cfs-esp.html>]

Patient Handouts

- Chronic fatigue syndrome/Systemic exertion intolerance disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001244.htm>]
(Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001244.htm>]



Chronic fatigue syndrome/Systemic exertion intolerance disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001244.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Fatigue [<https://medlineplus.gov/fatigue.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Chronic Fatigue Syndrome* is the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke [<http://www.ninds.nih.gov/>]

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