**DAILY MAIL**

**Got ME? Fatigued patients who go out and exercise have best hope of recovery, finds study**

By [Daily Mail Reporters](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=y&authornamef=Daily+Mail+Reporters)  
**UPDATED:** 11:32, 18 February 2011

It may seem counter-intuitive to patients suffering with fatigue, but scientists have found encouraging people with ME to push themselves to their limits gives the best hope of recovery.

British researchers conducted the largest trial to date of people with the mysterious and debilitating condition and found that up to 60 per cent of patients improved if therapists encouraged them gradually to do more.

By contrast, patients whose therapists encouraged them to accept the limits of their illness and adapt their lifestyles to live with it showed significantly less improvement when they were followed up after 24 and 52 weeks.

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a long-term debilitating condition of disabling physical and mental fatigue, poor concentration and memory, disturbed sleep and muscle and joint pain.

It also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) and affects around 17million people worldwide.

There is currently no cure for it and scientists don't know the cause.

Many sufferers say they think their illness started after a viral infection, but suggested links to a virus known as XMRV were shown in a recent scientific paper to have been based on contaminated samples in a lab.

 There is also controversy about what kinds of treatments should be given, with some patients reluctant to accept that psychotherapies might help.

Some patient groups in Britain, where more than a quarter of a million people are estimated to have the condition are concerned that such treatments may even be harmful.

But in this study, which involved 640 patients in Britain, researchers found that CBT and another therapy called gradual exercise therapy (GET) were far more successful than adaptive pacing therapy (APT), in which the patient tries only to match activity levels to the amount of energy they have.

'It is very encouraging that we have found not one but two treatments that are similarly helpful to patients,' said Trudie Chalder from King's College London, who worked on the study and published its findings in the Lancet medical journal today.

All patients in the trial received specialist medical care which included advice about managing the illness and prescribed medicines for symptoms such as insomnia and pain.

The success of the added therapies was measured by patient ratings of fatigue, physical function, overall health and the ability to lead a normal life, plus tests of how far the patient could walk in six minutes, and of sleep, mood and fatigue levels after exertion.

The results showed that CBT and GET benefited up to 60 per cent of patients, and around 30 per cent of patients in each of these treatment groups said their energy levels and ability to function and returned to near normal levels.

External experts commenting on the study said its design was robust and its findings important.

'This study... matters a lot. CFS/ME is common, and causes a lot of suffering,' said Professor Willie Hamilton of Britain's Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry.

'I now know what to suggest to my patients.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1358269/Chronic-fatigue-syndrome-ME-patients-exercise-best-hope-recovery-finds-study.html#ixzz24wfVZYL4>

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Results |
| 1. | [ME sufferers need to work themselves hard; Pacing is less effective, says study](%5Cl%22doc_id_1%22) The Times (London), February 18, 2011 Friday, NEWS; Pg. 17, 381 words, Chris Smyth |

[Return to List](%5Cl%22cite_id_1%22)

1 of 1 DOCUMENT

The Times (London)

February 18, 2011 Friday

Edition 2;

National Edition

**ME sufferers need to work themselves hard;**

**Pacing is less effective, says study**

**BYLINE:** Chris Smyth

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 17

**LENGTH:** 381 words

Patients with ME, also known as chronic fatigue syndrome, who are encouraged to "test their limits" mentally and physically do better than those whose therapies help them to adapt to the condition, research suggests.

Talking therapy and exercise both proved more effective than treatments which "pace" the patient's activity to their energy levels, a study in The Lancet concludes, with twice as many patients making a full recovery.

The study, based on the largest randomised trial of potential treatments, found that only a handful of patients worsened under any of the therapies.

ME (**myalgic** encephalomyelitis) affects about 250,000 people in Britain, leaving them severely lacking in energy. The cause of the condition remains unclear and evidence on effective treatments had been inconclusive. Professor Trudie **Chalder of King's College** London, a co-author of the study, said: "It is very encouraging that we have found not one but two treatments which are similarly helpful to patients, which provides them with a choice. We now need to find out what the common essential ingredient is that makes these treatments work, and which particular types of patients will respond best to which therapy."

About 30 per cent of patients given cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or graded exercise made a full recovery to normal levels of activity, the study found, while 60 per cent made at least modest improvements. Of patients given pacing therapy, 15 per cent recovered, while 42 per cent made some improvement.

These levels were almost identical in a control group.

Patients' groups said the study did not reflect the results of surveys of sufferers. Sir Peter Spencer, chief executive of Action for ME, said people with ME who were polled rated pacing as the most effective, while a third said that graded exercise made them worse.

In 2009 a US study reported finding a virus in most of the ME sufferers it tested, raising hopes that a physical cause might be discovered. Follow-up studies failed to replicate the findings.

Professor Michael Sharpe of Edinburgh University, a co-author of the study, said the effectiveness of CBT did not necessarily imply a psychological cause. "People with cancer have psychological treatment but no one suggests that they are imagining their cancer," he said.

**LOAD-DATE:** February 18, 2011

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newspaper

**JOURNAL-CODE:** TIM

Copyright 2011 Times Newspapers Limited

All Rights Reserved

**REUTERS**

**Pushing limits can help chronic fatigue patients**

By Kate Kelland

LONDON | Thu Feb 17, 2011 7:11pm EST

Helping chronic fatigue syndrome patients to push their limits and try to overcome the condition produces a better rate of recovery than getting them to accept the illness and adapt to a limited life, new research has found.

British researchers conducted the largest trial to date of people with the mysterious and debilitating condition, also known as ME, and found that up to 60 percent of patients improved if therapists encouraged them gradually to do more.

By contrast, patients whose therapists encouraged them to accept the limits of their illness and adapt their lifestyles to live with it showed significantly less improvement when they were followed up after 24 and 52 weeks.

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a long-term debilitating condition of disabling physical and mental fatigue, poor concentration and memory, disturbed sleep and muscle and joint pain.

It also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) and affects around 17 million people worldwide.

There is no cure for CSF/ME and scientists don't know what causes it.

Many sufferers say they think their illness started after a viral infection, but suggested links to a virus known as XMRV were shown in a recent scientific paper to have been based on contaminated samples in a lab.

There is also controversy about what kinds of treatments should be given, with some patients reluctant to accept that psychotherapies might help.

Some patient groups in Britain, where more than a quarter of a million people are estimated to have CFS/ME, have expressed concern that treatments like cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) that encourage patients to try to overcome or push the limits of their condition may even be harmful.

But in this study, which involved 640 patients in Britain, researchers found that CBT and another therapy called gradual exercise therapy (GET) were far more successful than adaptive pacing therapy (APT), in which the patient tries only to match activity levels to the amount of energy they have.

"It is very encouraging that we have found not one but two treatments that are similarly helpful to patients," said Trudie Chalder from King's College London, who worked on the study and published its findings in the Lancet medical journal on Friday.

All patients in the trial received specialist medical care which included advice about managing the illness and prescribed medicines for symptoms such as insomnia and pain.

The success of the added therapies was measured by patient ratings of fatigue, physical function, overall health and the ability to lead a normal life, plus tests of how far the patient could walk in six minutes, and of sleep, mood and fatigue levels after exertion.

The results showed that CBT and GET benefited up to 60 percent of patients, and around 30 percent of patients in each of these treatment groups said their energy levels and ability to function and returned to near normal levels.

External experts commenting on the study said its design was robust and its findings important.

"This study..matters a lot.

CFS/ME is common, and causes a lot of suffering," said Professor Willie Hamilton of Britain's Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry.

"I now know what to suggest to my patients."

(Reporting by Kate Kelland, editing by Paul Casciato)