

Your Health Reference Sheet

Topic: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)

By Carol Ritberger, PhD, Medical Intuitive

Once thought to be just a general fatigue that occurs through lack of sleep, or from overworking, or from prolonged bouts of stress, chronic fatigue syndrome, or CFS, is now believed to be the result of a variety of factors that create debilitating fatigue with associated symptoms that may last as long as six months to a year. The fatigue associated with CFS is so incapacitating that it prevents people from working, maintaining an active quality of life, or finding enough energy just to get themselves out of bed. In the United States alone, as many as 800,000 people, mostly women between the ages of 25-45, may be affected by CFS. Although there are no FDA-approved treatments for CFS, there are a number of medications, including antidepressants, that are used to treat its symptoms. However, the prognoses are usually better with the use of alternative therapies as many of the medications prescribed tend to create a myriad of their own problems.

Even though CFS has been recognized since 1988, there are still no conclusive causes that seem to trigger it. In fact, it's often referred to as a condition without a cause. There is, however, evaluation criteria that has been established by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and by the Oxford (British) Centers for Disease Control that's used to help in the diagnostic process. While unsure of what actually causes CFS, the general medical consensus is that it's the result of a suppressed immune system, and that its triggers may include infections; multiple nutrient deficiencies; allergies; extreme mental and emotional stress; viruses such as Epstein-Barr, herpes simplex (genital and oral), or human herpes virus 6 (HHV-6); neurotransmitter deficiencies; thyroid gland deficiencies; or various abnormalities of the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal connection and interaction. Some experts even believe that there's a connection between the chronic condition of fibromyalgia and CFS as many of the triggers are the same, and both appear to be the result of a suppressed immune system. Without a healthy immune system, the body is more likely to succumb to the contributors believed to be responsible for causing CFS.

Then there's a more controversial perspective offered by Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, a physician in Annapolis, Maryland, who, along with other alternative practitioners, believes that CFS is the result of a *core defect* in the energy furnaces found in the mitochondria of each and every cell. The mitochondria (plural for mitochondrion) are microscopic, capsule-like structures inside the cells. Their job is to produce the energy, in the form of a chemical called adenosine triphosphate, or ATP, that powers all functions of the body. Dr. Teitelbaum's opinion is that if the mitochondria are functioning inefficiently, they may

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