



**Southend University
Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information Service

The Essex Chronic Fatigue Service Information for young people aged 16-21

Time to live your life



Welcome to The Essex Chronic Fatigue Services. This document is designed to inform you of your diagnosis of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). If you have further questions please feel free to ask your current therapist. Your information will remain confidential within the Essex Chronic Fatigue Services and your GP practice.

What is Chronic Fatigue Syndrome?

CFS is a condition or syndrome which may also hear being referred to as ME which makes you feel very tired, unwell and can cause pain.

The tiredness of fatigue caused by CFS is an 'exhaustion' tiredness which feels quite different from the 'sleepy' tiredness that everyone feels at times. People of all ages can get CFS/and younger people mostly experience CFS during their teens.

How did I get it and when will I see improvements?

CFS is a syndrome which means a common collection of symptoms with no scientific diagnosis.

Doctors are still unsure about the cause of CFS although scientists are trying to find out what it is.

What is known about CFS is that it affects people differently. Some people get better in a few months and other people can take quite a bit longer to recover. There is no 'quick fix' for CFS so it is important for you to understand that the treatment may take time and require your perseverance.

The good news is that generally younger people with CFS recover faster and with better results than older people.

What can CFS do to me?

Most people don't experience all of the symptoms but the most common symptoms you may experience are:

Sleep – You may experience difficulty getting to sleep and/or getting up in the morning. You may sleep too much and wake up exhausted and you may feel drowsy during the day.

Diet – you may struggle to eat three meals a day because you are too tired and you may skip meals. Eating may make you feel sick, especially in the morning.

Pain – you may be experiencing headaches. Muscle pains around the body aren't uncommon.

Exercise – Any exercise may exhaust you, this can be either physical exercise such as walking or mental exercise such as playing on the Xbox or using the PC.

Thinking – You may experience difficulties concentrating for long periods and you may also notice your memory isn't as good as it usually is.

Feelings – you may experience an increase in stress or anxiety and you may also experience a depressed or low mood.

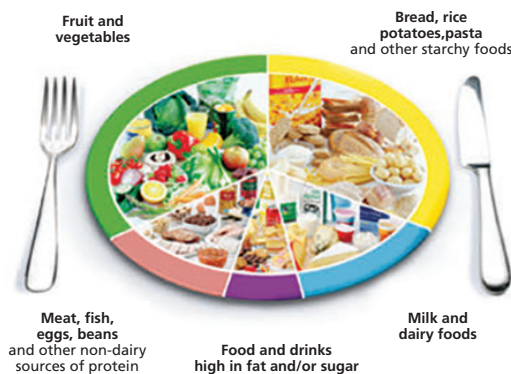
Other symptoms can include feeling hot and cold, sensitivity to bright lights and loud noises, a sore throat and painful glands particularly around the throat and under the arms.

If you sleep for a long time at night or during the day your therapist can work on your sleep patterns so that you can get the most out of your day.

If you feel stressed and low in mood your CBT therapist can help you to discover a much more positive self image of yourself and teach you to manage stress better.

What can I do to get better?

Although it's not curable at the moment through medication your consultant/doctor will be able to prescribe medicines for any particular troublesome symptoms. CFS can be managed through Occupational Therapy (OT), Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and Physiotherapy (PT) depending on your symptoms. Your therapist will help you with balancing rest and activity, relaxation and specific exercises to help relieve muscle pain and to help you cope with feeling unwell. Evidence suggests that most young people can recover from CFS.



Try to eat at least three meals a day. Eat fruit if you need to snack.

This is an important part of fatigue management.

Eat things like chocolate or crisps if you want to but moderate your intake.



Although with CFS it is important that you exercise, you need to maintain a level of exercise that does not over fatigue you.

Your physiotherapist or occupational therapist can recommend graded exercise programmes to gradually improve your fitness and reduce fatigue levels.

What about my learning?

Most young people continue learning at school, college or university after being diagnosed with CFS. Your therapist can advise you on how to manage your fatigue and your workload and teaching staff are legally obliged to support you in your learning place.

What about my job?

Your consultant and therapist can advise you on how to manage your fatigue and your workload. Your workplace is obliged by law to accommodate your illness to the best of their ability. Our OT will also provide support with 'Return to work' programmes and liaise with employers and occupational health departments.

Do I have to disclose my CFR diagnosis on an employment application form?

You are under no obligation to disclose your diagnosis of CFS. However there may be occasions where an application form requests specific medical information. It is worth noting that if you do not disclose CFS to an employer you do not come under the cover of the Equality Act 2010 and therefore would be unable to seek 'reasonable adjustments' in your workplace.

What about my social life?

Your therapist can advise you on how to manage social activity and fatigue. It is important to try to maintain your hobbies and interests when you are unwell.



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Reviewed and revised May 2017
Leaflet due for revision May 2019

Our literature has been reviewed by our patient representative

Form No. SOU4322 Version 3