

## What is Fibromyalgia (FM)

Fibromyalgia is a chronic condition characterized by intense widespread pain in muscles, ligaments and tendons.

### The main symptoms include:

- Widespread pain with multiple tender points where the slightest pressure causes pain.
- Fatigue.
- Sleep dysfunction.
- Overall stiffness.
- Poor memory and concentration.
- Impaired coordination and clumsiness.

## What is Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS)

MCS is also called Environmental Sensitivities or Intolerances. It means an unusually severe sensitivity or allergy-like reaction to many different kinds of pollutants such as chemicals and perfumes and other environmental triggers.

### Symptoms:

- The main symptoms include: headache, balance problems, irritability, depressed mood, burning or irritated eyes, stuffy or runny nose, cough, fast heartbeat, nausea, diarrhea, constipation, frequent urination, achy muscles or joints and skin rash.
- Stronger sense of smell than most people.
- Feeling spacey, dull or groggy.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Symptoms improve or resolve when triggers are removed.

## Your financial and volunteer support is needed

The MEAO is a voluntary organization dedicated to improving the lives of people living with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME), Fibromyalgia (FM) and Multiple Chemical Sensitivities (MCS).

The MEAO was formed in 1991 by people living with ME, FM and MCS and we are committed to helping people with all these related illnesses. We offer a toll-free Provincial Info-Line, Website, Quarterly Newsletters, Free Community Workshops and many more services.

**For more information on memberships or to make a donation, please call.**

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Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario  
170 The Donway West, Ste. 402  
Toronto, Ontario M3C 2G3  
Info Line: 416-222-8820  
Toll Free: 1-877-632-6682  
Website: [www.meao-cfs.on.ca](http://www.meao-cfs.on.ca)  
Email: [info@meao-cfs.on.ca](mailto:info@meao-cfs.on.ca)  
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## An Introduction to Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (Chronic Fatigue Syndrome)

And the related illnesses  
Fibromyalgia &  
Multiple Chemical Sensitivities

## What is Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis is a severe chronic illness that is more commonly known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. It is also called ME or CFS for short. A person with ME/CFS is plagued by many chronic symptoms, in addition to fatigue, and the symptoms are worsened by physical activity. The illness affects the brain, central nervous system, heart, muscles and endocrine system. It is considered a neurological and an immune system disorder.

## Who gets ME/CFS

The illness can attack at any age, including children, but most people affected are adults and up to 70% are women. ME/CFS does not discriminate; it affects people of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and all education and income levels.

## What causes ME/CFS

Most people become suddenly ill after a flu or other infection, some after damage to the brain and central nervous system from an accident or an environmental exposure. More research is required. Exciting new research into the causes of ME is underway but more research is needed.

## Diagnosis

There is no one test that can diagnose Myalgic Encephalomyelitis. A diagnosis is based on a set of symptoms that must last for 6 months or longer for adults and 3 months for children.

Most patients undergo extensive blood work and months of tests for a diagnosis to be made.

### Symptoms:

- Severe fatigue which has persisted or reoccurred during six or more consecutive months.
- Profound physical and mental exhaustion out of proportion to the activity.
- Post exertion exhaustion lasting twenty-four hours or more, which is not alleviated with bed rest.
- Unrefreshing and unrestorative sleep.
- Decreased memory and concentration.
- Patients must also have several of the following symptoms: sensitivity to noise, light and sound; dizziness, balance problems, muscle pain and pain in multiple joints, weight loss or gain, low blood pressure, palpitations, shortness of breath, sore throat, irritable bowel syndrome, swollen lymph glands and flu-like symptoms, inability to regulate body temperature, new sensitivities to chemicals, foods and medications.

## Impact on those living with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Most people living with ME/CFS cannot work for long periods of time and many must give up their jobs, often for life. Their incomes drop drastically and many live on disability payments.

The social cost of ME can also be very high; family and financial stresses, lost dreams and relationships.

Although some people may recover, most adults never fully recover and there are many Canadians who are ill for 20 years or more. Children may recover faster than adults.

Good health care as well as an early and accurate diagnosis are vital, although difficult to obtain. People with ME also need support from family, friends, workplaces and all disability services.

## Cure/Treatment

There is currently no known cure for ME/CFS but early diagnosis and treatment of symptoms makes a difference.

People who have ME/CFS often live with Fibromyalgia and /or Multiple Chemical Sensitivities.