

## CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME (CFS)

Also known as **MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS (M.E.)**

### KEY SYMPTOMS:

#### FATIGUE:

Unexplained, persistent or recurrent physical and mental fatigue that can substantially reduce daily activity.

#### LOSS OF STAMINA AND MUSCLE STRENGTH:

The slightest physical or mental activity may require a recovery period of 24 hours or longer.

#### SLEEP DYSFUNCTION:

Disturbed and "un-refreshing" sleep.

#### IMMUNE DYSFUNCTION:

Recurring "flu-like" symptoms involving a sore throat and tender neck glands; New sensitivities to drugs, foods or the environment.

#### PAIN:

Muscle and joint pain; Headaches involving new patterns and severity.

### OTHER COMMON SYMPTOMS:

#### BRAIN DYSFUNCTION:

Reduced short-term memory and concentration; Difficulty retrieving words, processing information and reduced ability to multi-task; Increased sensitivity to: light, movement, sound and emotional stress.

#### NEUROENDOCRINE SYSTEM:

Difficulty in regulating body temperature; Marked weight change (weight gain or weight loss).

#### AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM:

Difficulty standing and balancing; Delayed hypotension causing dizziness; Bladder dysfunction (increased urinary frequency); Irritable bowel syndrome; Shortness of breath and heart palpitations (with or without cardiac arrhythmia).

### COURSE OF ILLNESS:

Onset is usually distinct but may be gradual. A diagnosis requires that children have the symptoms for more than three (3) months and adults for more than six (6) months.

Duration and severity of the illness (CFS / M.E.) may vary with each person. Some individuals are bedridden and require a wheelchair for mobility while others may be able to continue work or attend school with some physical limitations.

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH CFS / M.E.

CFS / M.E. has a particularly negative impact on children and youth. Cognitive difficulties, muscle weakness and exhaustion often make it difficult for them to study or attend school regularly. Extra tutoring and/or Home Instruction may, at times, be necessary. Dealing with a chronic illness may also interfere with their normal social development.

### HOME CARE SERVICES:

Many people with CFS / M.E. require Home Care Services. To ensure adequate support and rehabilitation services, people with CFS / M.E. should have a thorough initial assessment and frequent reassessments thereafter so as to regularly evaluate the severity of the illness and secure the corresponding appropriate level of Home Care Services.

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**Early diagnosis and proper treatment including PLENTY OF REST and NOT PUSHING ONESELF may minimize the impact of the illness and increase the possibility of early remission or recovery.**

For further information on CFS / M.E. contact our Help-Line or visit our website:

**The Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario**

**416.222.8820 1.877.632.6682 info@meao.ca www.meao.ca**