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**SUPPORT FOR
BONE AND
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Too Tired for Anything

By Janet Poveromo

Chronic fatigue syndrome can be incapacitating, but there are natural health modifications that can help bring energy back into lives.

Because its symptoms are difficult to measure, chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) wasn't widely accepted as a real medical condition for several years. Today, however, medical experts agree that this chronic condition should be taken seriously.

That's good news considering the problem of CFS is growing rapidly as the stress of modern life increases, said Jacob Teitelbaum MD, medical director of the national Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers, headquartered in Dallas, TX.

"Women's magazine covers reflect this trend," Teitelbaum said. "When cover stories are not about celebrities, they are on how to lose weight or improve energy. Women of all ages are the main buyers. CFS, and its painful cousin fibromyalgia (FM), are skyrocketing. It is estimated that they affect six to 12 million women in the US. In addition, fatigue is a common problem for the majority of the population."

Cascading Causes

CFS is not the kind of fatigue patients experience after a busy week, sleepless nights or stressful events, noted Denise Eaton, Bach Foundation Registered Practitioner with Nelsons/Bach Original

Flower Remedies (North Andover, MA). "According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it's a severe, incapacitating fatigue that isn't improved by bed rest and that may be exacerbated by physical or mental activity. It's an all-encompassing fatigue that results in a dramatic decline in both activity level and stamina."

"I would say the state of the market for CFS is confused," said Ken Whitman, president of Peter Gillham's Natural Vitality (Burbank, CA). "CFS and FM sufferers are trying to get some relief and I don't believe there is a clear cut direction, but many voices with many different opinions."

And in the medical research world, at this time a definitive cause of CFS is

unknown, said Dr. Isaac Eliaz, MD, MS, LAc, founder of the nutraceutical company EcoNugenics (Santa Rosa, CA). "However, there are different theories on the causes of CFS, and its associated syndrome Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome (CFIDS). My theory is that there are different agents that can contribute to CFS. Also, there can be varying layers of causative agents that multiply together in an individual, inducing a cascade effect to produce a more complex form of CFS."

Agreeing on the complexity of the condition is Dr. Sherrill Sellman, a naturopathic doctor, board certified in integrative medicine. She added that fatigue problems might be caused by toxicity from industrial chemicals or prescribed medications, or result from chronic infection, trauma injury or excessive stress. "An imbalance in thyroid, pituitary or adrenal hormones, compromised immunity and underlying infections can contribute chronic fatigue, as can a dietary insufficiency or imbalance," she said.



Teitelbaum explained that CFS and FM occur when the energy crisis becomes so severe as to cause people to “blow a fuse” called the hypothalamus. “This area uses an enormous amount of energy for its size, and therefore goes off line first when our bodies face an energy crisis. The illness affects the immune and hormonal systems as well. Most immune illnesses affect predominantly women (for example, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, etc.,” he said. In addition are lower testosterone and DHEA levels, thyroid inflammation and drops in reproductive hormones (menopause and peri-

and 37 percent improvement in quality of life by simply taking ribose 5g three times daily for three weeks. I have not seen any other single nutrient or treatment be that powerfully effective in optimizing energy.”

In addition, Sellman pointed to a 2008 study on adrenal dysfunction in the *Journal of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome*. Analysis of the data in more than 50 studies that assessed adrenal function in CFS and FM patients demonstrated that the majority of CFS and FM patients have abnormal adrenal function due to hypothalamic-pituitary dysfunction.

said Eliaz, “supplements and herbs that increase immune activity and boost circulation, as well as help to regulate adaptogenic responses in the body, can be of benefit for CFS patients.

“Adaptogenic responses are the way the whole body system ‘adapts’ to, or deals with stress and illness, particularly the adrenal glands,” he added. “When a person is chronically stressed—physically, mentally and emotionally—the adrenals become exhausted, and stress and fatigue becomes much more severe. Providing adrenal and whole body immune support with adaptogenic herbs is important in treating CFS.”

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menopause). Women are also more likely to be working two full-time jobs these days (being out in the workplace while also raising a family and being a homemaker). For all these reasons, CFS and FM affect women three times as often as men, Teitelbaum pointed out.

The way to distinguish normal fatigue from chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia are:

- The symptoms do not go away with vacation and persist over three months.
- The fatigue is associated with insomnia instead of increasing sleep.
- The fatigue is associated with other symptoms such as widespread pain, “brain fog,” sugar craving, weight gain and loss of libido.

Hopeful Science

There are new studies looking at hormonal and nutritional deficiencies contributing to fatigue as well as CFS and FM, Teitelbaum noted. “We are preparing a study for publication that was done at 53 different health practitioners’ offices and involved 257 patients with chronic fatigue syndrome or fibromyalgia. It showed an astounding average 61 percent increase in energy

“It was also shown that the majority of patients should be treated for this adrenal dysfunction since many of the standard tests do not pick up this particular type of adrenal dysfunction. The data shows that such treatment is safer and more effective than commonly used treatments such as antidepressants,” Sellman said.

Beneficial Supplementation

The effect of ribose is very dramatic, said Teitelbaum, adding that simple dietary modification such as avoiding sugar and increased water intake can be very helpful. “B vitamins and magnesium are also very important for energy production, and sustained release magnesium can be helpful in those who get diarrhea,” he said.

“Magnesium deficiency is common in chronic fatigue syndrome and fibromyalgia sufferers,” agreed Carolyn Dean, MD, ND. “Our sedentary lifestyle, consumption of processed foods combined with antibiotics, environmental chemicals and polluted atmosphere have coincided with a greater frequency of mineral and nutrient deficiencies and chronic fatigue than ever before.”

“In my experience as a practitioner,”

An anti-inflammation diet, high in antioxidant-rich foods and green leafy and cruciferous vegetables, and low in sugars and processed foods, can also be of benefit to CFS patients. If a person’s diet is a typical SAD (Standard American Diet) high in sugars, trans-fats and processed foods, switching to a healthier, more nutrient rich diet may cause initial discomfort and cleansing reactions, similar to some CFS symptoms. It is important to have the guidance of a practitioner experienced in whole-food nutrition to help you through if you are not familiar with this terrain. “Also, since food allergies can sometimes trigger CFS symptoms, it is a good idea to pay close attention to the body’s reactions to certain foods, and if necessary, ask your doctor to check for antibodies to specific allergens,” Eliaz said.

A Treatment of Rest and Bliss

“After testing hundreds of women with saliva testing to evaluate their hormones, I have not found one woman who was not in some stage of adrenal dysfunction,” said Sellman. She said the more severe the adrenal dysfunction, the more

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severe the symptoms of CFS. "It is imperative that women support their adrenals at all stages of their life with adrenal support formulas and supplements. The more the adrenals become exhausted, the more a woman will experience severe fatigue, pain and inflammation, compromised immunity, compromised digestion, insomnia, depression and anxiety, short-term memory impairment, blood sugar imbalances, susceptibility to infections, virus, candida, etc."

Teitelbaum offered three key physical factors and one key psycho-spiritual factor for those who want to optimize their energy and avoid unhealthy fatigue.

Feed your body. Although supplements can be helpful, eating a natural, whole foods diet is the key to giving your body what it needs. Most people need to increase water intake and it is also important to eliminate excess sugar (sugar belongs in your dessert, not as main dish).

Rest your body. We are becoming a sleep-deprived nation. The average

night sleep in the United States 100 years ago was nine hours a night and this has now decreased to 6.5 hours a night. Make time for sleep by cutting out things that are not fun (e.g., belonging to committees that you don't enjoy or watching the evening news). Natural herbal remedies for sleep may include valerian, passionflower, theanine, hops, Jamaican dogwood and wild lettuce.

Use your body. The body has a "use it or lose it" approach to efficient function. Go out and exercise daily, preferably doing things that you find enjoyable.

It is important to remember the key psycho-spiritual aspect of optimizing energy as well, Teitelbaum added. "Sometimes ignore your brain and check in with your feelings about what feels the best to you—and then to choose to pay attention to that."

Sellman also noted that with CFS sufferers there is often unresolved emotional component that has been an underlying dynamic contributing to chronic stress response.

"This has been summarized suc-

cinctly in the past by Joseph Campbell who said, 'follow your bliss' and by Abraham Lincoln who said 'people are about as happy as they choose to be,'" added Teitelbaum. "It is okay to choose to pay attention to and do those things that feel good to you. Otherwise, don't expect your body to continue giving you energy to do things you hate." **VR**

Extra! Extra!

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