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Dealing with depression as a couple can be difficult, as men and women may experience depression differently.¹

¹ Bhafra, Subhash, et al. "Depression in Women: Diagnostic and Treatment Considerations." *American Family Physician*. 1999, 60(1).

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Commentary Author: Jacob Teitelbaum, MD Last Updated: May 12, 2009 - 10:37:04 AM

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Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Awareness Day

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By Jacob Teitelbaum, MD
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Chronic Fatigue Syndrome IQ Test



(HealthNewsDigest.com) - As the "Rodney Dangerfield" of chronic illnesses, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and its painful cousin Fibromyalgia (FMS) have a long history of getting no respect! Even in 2009, it's surprising how little the medical profession understands these disabling conditions, routinely misdiagnoses and too often dismisses them. Only in the past few years have CFS/FMS been recognized officially as physical illnesses by the CDC and NIH.

To determine how much you know (or don't know) about chronic fatigue, take the quick CFS IQ test below. You'll definitely be surprised by the factoids provided after each answer.

1. The reason CFS has not been considered a real physical disease is because no single medical test can confirm its existence.

True or False

Answer: False. CFS is a complex syndrome involving no less than a dozen infections and subgroups, with well over 100 common causes and contributing factors. It is not a homogeneous disease but a common endpoint; therefore no single test alone can accurately confirm its presence.

2. Since CFS symptoms are numerous and seemingly unrelated, most cases are actually



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Actor Rob Lowe & Michael J. McCurdy, Founder/Publisher of HealthNewsDigest.com



Dr. Samieh Sam Rizk, M.D., F.A.C.S.
Director, Manhattan Facial Plastic Surgery

psychosomatic in origin.

True or False

Answer: False. It's logical that doctors write off CFS as being psychosomatic because of the many seemingly unrelated symptoms, and a traditional gender bias. Eighty percent of CFS patients are women. The long list of symptoms stems from the breakdown of the body's major fuse called the hypothalamus. When this master gland malfunctions, all of the systems it regulates are affected, including—the glands (affecting the thyroid, adrenals, and sex hormones), the autonomic system (which regulates body temperature, blood pressure/blood flow, sweating), and the sleep center. Additionally, the depression which is present in many CFS patients is a natural reaction to being chronically ill with no hope of cure in sight.

3. In addition to brain fog, achiness, weight gain, low libido, and recurring infections, the coup de grace for defining CFS is exhaustion accompanied by insomnia.

True or False

Answer: True. Being too exhausted to sleep is a common feature of CFS/FMS, which is connected to hypothalamic suppression. When the body's sleep center is out of order even bone-crushing fatigue cannot induce sleep. Without deep sleep, the immune system is compromised, the body cannot repair itself, and the patient remains chronically ill.

4. Red Cross founder Florence Nightingale, WW II hero General Douglas Macarthur, Swedish industrialist Alfred Nobel and entertainment superstar Cher all suffered from CFS.

True or False

Answer: True. Ironically, many famous people now and in the past have suffered from CFS/FMS. "Over-achiever" types are particularly susceptible because they're constantly pushing the energy envelope until they 'break the bank.'" When they finally blow out their hypothalamus, they have created a chronic energy deficit that requires comprehensive and deep repair.

5. New drugs like Lyrica and Cymbalta are promising cures for CFS/FMS.

True or False

Answer: False. These pharmaceuticals are like band aids that can help patients feel more comfortable but they do not treat the underlying problem, which is the only real solution. When a red light flashes on your dashboard, it's a sign that something is seriously wrong with the engine and needs immediate attention. Treating symptoms is important but never solves the deeper problem, which is the only way to give CFS/FMS patients their lives back.

6. CFS is an energy crisis in the body in which the hypothalamus stops functioning and the body essentially blows a fuse to circumvent further damage.

True or False

Answer: True. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/FMS acts as a "circuit breaker," with the hypothalamus decreasing its function to protect the individual in the face of what is perceived to be an overwhelming stress (just like blowing a fuse/circuit breaker in a



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house). This center controls sleep, hormones, temperature, and blood flow/blood pressure and sweating. When you don't sleep deeply, your immune system stops working properly and you experience pain (fibromyalgia). In addition, if your muscles do not have enough energy, they will get stuck in the shortened position and you'll experience pain (think rigor mortis). This "energy crisis" can be caused by any of a number of infections, injuries, or stresses, including child birth.

7. CFS, a.k.a., "Yuppie Flu," is primarily present in developed countries like the U.S., U.K. and Germany.

True or False

Answer: False. CFS was previously dismissed as "yuppie flu" but now we know better. Over the past 10 years, the incidence of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and Fibromyalgia (FMS) has exploded by ~ 400 to 1000 percent worldwide, as documented in five separate international studies. The numbers for those with CFS in the U.S., previously estimated at 500,000, are now being re-tallied at closer to 2.5 million. Americans with FMS were previously thought to be 6 million, but are now estimated at more than 24 million. The rising prevalence of CFS/FMS globally reflects the epidemic of modern living with inescapable exposure to pesticides, poor food quality, increased stress, bad eating habits, poor nutrition (SAD—Standard American Diet), insufficient sleep, increased infections and over-treatment with antibiotics, to name a few key factors.

8. People with lower incomes and higher stress are more likely to contract fibromyalgia.

True or False

Answer: True. People in poverty and high stress are more likely to contract fibromyalgia. Unfortunately, they are less likely to stand up for themselves if their doctor tells them their pain is "all in your head." Historically, physicians have dismissed other serious diseases as being hysteria, including rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and muscular sclerosis.

9. If you have sleep disorders you're more prone to contracting CFS.

True or False

Answer: True. Insomnia, sleep apnea and restless leg syndrome (RLS) can eventually lead to Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Sleep problems from chronic stress or having a baby are common triggers for CFS/FMS.

10. There is no effective treatment for CFS and FMS so it's best to learn how to live with them.

True or False

Answer: False. This widely held fallacy comes from the fact that drug companies have been unable to find a "magic bullet" cure. Gold standard research published in the Journal of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (2001; 8:2) showed that after 2 years of treatment with the comprehensive SHINE protocol, 91 percent of patients improved with a 90 percent improvement in their quality of life. SHINE focuses on Sleep, Hormones, Infections, Nutrition, and Exercise.

Score each question as 10 points out of 100. If you had a perfect 100 CFS IQ, you should book yourself immediately on radio and TV talk shows nationwide and spread the word. And don't forget to share your wisdom with doctors and patients who still believe that CFS/FMS are incurable!



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About Jacob Teitelbaum, MD

Board certified internist Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, is Medical Director of the national Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers (www.fibroandfatigue.com) and one of world's leading authorities on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia.

Dr. Teitelbaum is senior author of the landmark studies "Effective Treatment of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia -- a Placebo-controlled Study" and "Effective Treatment of CFS & Fibromyalgia with D-Ribose." He is author of the best-selling book From Fatigued to Fantastic! (3rd revised edition, Avery/Penguin Group) and Pain Free 1-2-3—A Proven Program for Eliminating Chronic Pain Now (McGraw-Hill). His web site www.endfatigue.com provides a free computerized physician to create a customized SHINE protocol and start getting you better now.

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