

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO HOSPITAL
THE CENTER FOR INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

CHRONIC FATIGUE

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a complex disorder that can be difficult to diagnose and treat. The Center for Integrative Medicine can aid in treatment and recommend approaches to relieve symptoms while augmenting the conventional care regimen you prescribe.

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THREE CONSIDERATIONS WHEN TREATING CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME:

1.

There is no specific diagnostic test for chronic fatigue syndrome. Generally patients suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome experience profound fatigue for six months or longer. Many other symptoms, such as weakness, muscle pain, impaired memory, anxiety, panic attacks and insomnia may be present in patients with chronic fatigue syndrome. Specific tests must be performed before a patient is diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome. These tests will rule out treatable illnesses such as thyroid disease, sleep disorder, diabetes, vitamin deficiency, cancer or depression. The Center for Integrative Medicine's physicians will work with you to confirm a chronic fatigue syndrome diagnosis.

2.

Patients with chronic fatigue syndrome often suffer from conditions such as fibromyalgia, chemical sensitivities, anxiety disorder and major depression, making it difficult to diagnose the condition and treat it with conventional medication. Although the conditions may coexist, chronic fatigue syndrome is not caused by depression. Many patients with chronic fatigue syndrome have no psychiatric disorder.

3.

Conventional medication often does not provide patients the relief they seek. While patients may ask for medications, none have been shown to effectively treat chronic fatigue syndrome. Studies suggest the most effective treatment plan for the condition combines graded sleep, exercise and behavioral therapies. To be successful, this type of treatment requires patients to be actively involved in their therapy and committed to the program. Practitioners at The Center for Integrative Medicine spend time with each patient to explain the diagnosis and recommended treatment plan. In order to provide important feedback and to monitor results, patients are encouraged to keep a journal between visits.

HOW INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE CAN BENEFIT YOUR PATIENTS WITH CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME:

TYPICAL TREATMENT PLAN

HEALTH AND WELLNESS VISIT

DIAGNOSIS CONFIRMATION

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SLEEP, EXERCISE AND BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

CONSIDERATION OF CAM THERAPIES

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS (ON A REGULAR BASIS)

LETTER TO PHYSICIANS

CAM THERAPIES* AND SELF-CARE STRATEGIES USED TO TREAT CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

SLEEP AND EXERCISE

A pattern of good sleep and a daily aerobic exercise routine can help manage chronic fatigue. Behavioral techniques, medications or a referral to a sleep specialist may be recommended to facilitate good sleep. To promote exercise, The Center for Integrative Medicine will create and discuss an individualized, graded program with your patient.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

In order to change self-defeating behaviors and enhance self-belief, patients will meet with one of The Center for Integrative Medicine's experienced psychologists. The psychologist may integrate stress-reduction techniques such as mindfulness, guided imagery or meditation.

MEDICATION MANAGEMENT

Patients will review any medication they are taking, or have previously taken, with a physician. The physician will discuss with them any medications that have been shown to help their condition. As narcotics may worsen chronic fatigue syndrome, patients are typically encouraged to decrease or stop the use of narcotics.

COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE (CAM) THERAPIES

If patients demonstrate adherence to their individualized sleep, exercise and behavioral therapy treatment plan, CAM therapies such as massage, acupuncture, nutritional counseling or chiropractic may be considered. There is only anecdotal evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of CAM therapies when treating chronic fatigue syndrome. They may, however, be safe options that are worth considering on a case-by-case basis.



fig. 1 - Moderate and graded aerobic exercise such as yoga can provide relief to patients with chronic fatigue syndrome. Weekly yoga classes are available to patients at The Center for Integrative Medicine.

*Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) therapies are alternative medicine treatments such as acupuncture or chiropractic that are used to complement traditional conventional care provided by physicians.

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

Your patients can schedule appointments at The Center for Integrative Medicine by calling 720.848.1090. Appointments can be made Monday through Friday, 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, with limited evening availability. If you would like to provide us with information prior to a patient's visit (encouraged), please fax a consult and/or relevant records to 720.848.1277.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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