

Natural Treatments for Chronic Fatigue **By Dr. Jeannie Doig, HBSc, ND**

Chronic fatigue syndrome is a debilitating condition involving a sudden onset of severe fatigue lasting for at least six months, along with recurrent sore throats, painful lymph nodes, poor sleep, muscle weakness and pain, and prolonged fatigue after exercise. The cause is unknown; however many theories exist to explain this condition. For example, this condition can be attributed to poor immune system function due to viruses normally lying dormant in the body (such as Herpes virus or Lyme disease). Also, depression, extreme prolonged physical exercise, mental or emotional stress, food allergies, candidiasis (yeast build-up in the body), heavy metal toxicity, and impaired liver detoxification are all other possible causes and underlying factors that need to be investigated.

Naturopathic physicians focus on treating the “cause” rather than just masking symptoms. To determine and rule out certain causes of illnesses, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, naturopathic physicians investigate for food sensitivities, heavy metal toxicity, yeast build-up (candidiasis), and adrenal fatigue (lowered levels of adrenalin and cortisol due to chronic stress).

Naturopathic treatments are individualized for each patient case. To boost immune function and energy, regular intravenous vitamin cocktails can be very effective. High doses of vitamin C, B complex, magnesium, B12, B6, and B5, and glutathione are more rapidly and effectively absorbed in the blood stream compared to oral vitamins. These vitamin shots boost energy almost immediately, and the effects can last for several weeks. Magnesium deficiency is common in people with chronic fatigue syndrome and related conditions such as fibromyalgia. Symptoms such as muscle twitches, anxiety, restless leg syndrome, heart palpitations, and headaches or migraines are often indicative of magnesium deficiency.

Exposure to food additives, solvents (cleaning materials, formaldehyde), pesticides, herbicides, and heavy metals (lead, mercury, cadmium, arsenic, nickel, and aluminum) can stress the liver and impair detoxification processes. Hypoallergenic diets along with nutrients that facilitate detoxification are shown to significantly reduce symptoms of chronic fatigue syndrome. Naturopathic doctors prescribe detoxification diets and vitamin formulas with herbs such as milk thistle and dandelion root to improve liver detoxification. Herbs such as ginseng and licorice root may also be helpful. Both herbs support the immune system (licorice root specifically has anti-viral properties) and help restore energy levels.

Lifestyle counselling to change negative thinking patterns into positive ones is crucial for those seeking to heal from chronic fatigue syndrome. Both energy levels and the immune system benefit from positive thinking. Exercises to help reduce stress like deep breathing and gentle yoga are also very important for the healing process.

Naturopathic doctors focus on treating the cause of diseases and healing the body naturally through diet, vitamins, herbal medicine, and homeopathy.