

# CHRONIC FATIGUE

By Dr Trish Zingel

## Practical Tips

Some tips that might help. You are not alone. Your body is telling you that you need to do things differently.

1 **Exercise** - Fatigue after exercise is one of the hallmark symptoms of chronic fatigue. The key word is **PACING**. In 2019 there was a Cochrane review that showed that exercise therapy may slightly reduce fatigue. Some recent research has come out of Otago University that has shown that there are changes at the mitochondrial level in people with CFS. The research has been done by Warren Tate and Airuddha Chatterjee. Never push the boundaries too hard, and only attempt what you feel you can comfortably manage. Often people with CFS have low blood pressure, it may be easier to do your exercises lying down. A GREEN prescription might be helpful.

2 **Rest** – Rest is a lot more than physical. A book I recently read talked about 7 domains of rest 1 **Mental** 2 **Emotional** 3 **Physical** 4 **Social** 5 **Spiritual** 6 **Sensory** 7 **Creative**. If you have deficits in a number of these areas you will feel tired. Take the rest quiz and see where you fit - [restquiz.com](http://restquiz.com). The book is called Sacred Rest by Dr Sandra Dalton-Smith. Dr Libby Weavers book “Exhausted to Energised” is also helpful.

3 **Stress**. Stress has a huge impact on our wellbeing. Many people with CFS have to cope with many different stresses. There is often significant losses that people with CFS have to face. Often chronic stress can lead to depression. **In CFS the stress response pathways are abnormal. The levels of cortisol produced by the adrenals is lower.** It takes longer to recover from stress. It is easy to get stuck in negative thinking. Our thinking and emotions drive each other and these in turn are driven by beliefs and memories. CFS like any other chronic illness shakes our beliefs and values. It is important to acknowledge stress, thinking, emotions and our beliefs. It is essential to get support. We often need professional support. Talk Therapy is more effective than medication in mild to moderate depression. “Just a Thought” is an online cognitive behavioural tool that helps anxiety and depression. I have found podcasts and books from Caroline Leaf very helpful. The book, “The Happiness Trap” by Russ Harris is a self-help book to help you manage your thoughts and emotions and still do the things that are important to you. You can talk to your GP about talk therapy options that are available.

4 **Things work together** - Your adrenals (stress managing organs), hormones and digestion all work together. If your adrenals are struggling they will impact your hormones. If you can support your adrenals your hormones will improve.

5 **Don't forget to BREATHE** - It might sound very simple, but when you breathe using your chest wall you are telling your brain that you are in danger!!! Most people breathe like this!!! When you breathe from your diaphragm you are telling your brain that everything is

ok!!! Your body kicks into rest and restore. Simple, but powerful. Look up diaphragmatic breathing online.

6 **Sleep**. Sleep management is essential. Sleep is the time that the body restores itself. If you have sleep issues it is important to have a sleep management plan. Many people with CFS have sleep issues. Low dose tricyclics such as amitriptyline or nortriptyline can be helpful. They help with the stage 4 deep sleep.

#### 7 **Supplements**

Adrenal support there are many herbs that help support your stress response i.e withania 5-HTP can help with mood and sleep

Evening primrose oil can help with breast pain

Omega 3 improve circulation

Garlic antiviral properties

Ginger to help nausea

Ginkgo can help brain flow

Probiotics support good bacteria in the gut

St John's Wort can support mood

#### 8 **Medications**

Depression and anxiety – the use of SSRI's and tricyclics

Pain traditional pain medication – avoid opiate medication as they are not good for long term pain management – use of gabapentin or pregabalin for long term pain can be very helpful

Orthostatic intolerance – POTS can use fludrocortisone

Sleep first line is tricyclics. It is worth trying melatonin. Quetiapine is another options use very low doses start low and go slow. Avoid regular use of sleeping tablets (easier said than done!!)

#### **Things you can start today**

Be **kind** to your self. Treat yourself like you would a friend. Self-compassion is huge. Loving ourselves is just as important as loving others.

Increase your **water** aim at least 2 litres a day. In CFS often people's blood pressure is low. You might find adding a pinch of salt with your water helpful. Also sprinkle some salt on your food every 2 – 3 hours. Some people find drinking electrolytes helpful.

Increase your **vegetables**. There is a lot of confusion about diet out there, nobody argues about vegetables. The more colour you have in your diet the better. Your body absorbs minerals better from vegetables than supplements. Eat small amounts often. Try and drink fluids 30 min either side of your meals.

**Cut out sugar** and refined foods.

**Cut out alcohol** at least reduce by ½.

**Limit caffeine** 1 – 2 per day max.

If you have a regular period , recent research has shown a **iron** supplement will improve wellbeing.

### **Supplements**

Magnesium – muscle cramps

Co-enzyme Q10 – muscle pain

Omega 3 – help brain function

Omega 6 breast pain

Vit B12 improve energy – I recommend also a B complex so the B vitamins are balanced

**Adrenal support** supplement – there are a number of herbal medicines that will help adrenal function

For supplements you can talk to your pharmacist. John's Photopharmacy in 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave has a good herbal dispensary.

### **Recovery A Journey**

Helpful Book “ Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome” by Dr Fred Friedberg

7 Steps

1 Use active, extended relaxation strategies

2 Sleeping better, relaxing more

3 How to pace all of your activities, it is more than you think

4 Identifying and lessening anger

5 Finding relief from worry, discouragement and grief

6 Easing into pleasant events and pleasurable feelings

7 Getting support from others

