

Systems of the Body

Within our bodies we have many systems which operate to perform processes that keep our bodies functioning optimally. We have all heard of the Cardiovascular system, Digestive system, and the Nervous system, these are a few of the complex systems that help to keep mammals alive, there are 11 systems in total.

It has been found that in people with ME/CFS and FM many of the systems are functioning sub-optimally due to conditions, often our symptoms are signs that a system is not working at its best.

So let's look at some of the systems and find out what we can do to support them better, get out your curious detective hat!

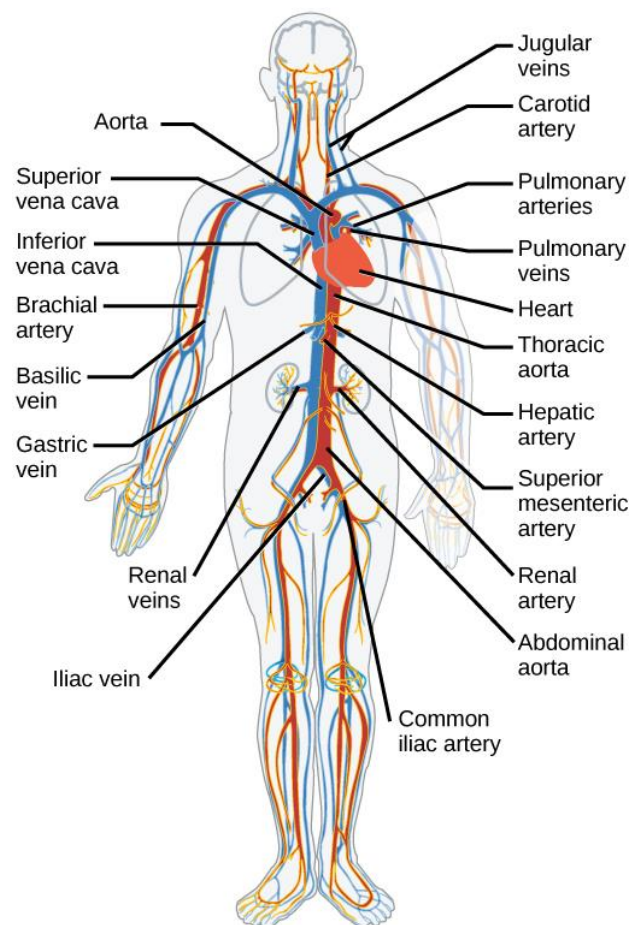
THE CARDIOVASCULAR/CIRCULATORY SYSTEM consists of the heart, blood vessels, and approximately 5 litres of blood that the blood vessels transport per minute, even in a restful state. Responsible for transporting oxygen, nutrients, hormones, and cellular waste products throughout the body in order to maintain optimal functioning.

Possible ME/CFS/FM Symptoms:

- Inefficient pumping from the heart.
- Low blood pressure.
- Decreased blood volume (up to 1/3)
- Poor circulation
- Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS).
- Heart palpitations.
- Light-headedness (not enough blood getting to the brain).
- Heart and pulse dysregulation (which affects the overall circulation/detoxification process that works to rid waste and rebuild damaged cells)

Possible Steps to Wellness:

- Regular fluids and salt intake (if you don't have high blood pressure) and potassium rich foods i.e. bananas and kiwifruit (which is lost when you have a high salt intake).
- Relaxation and breathing practices (to help circulate oxygen around the blood)
- Treatment for depression may be applicable (as depression slows down circulation).
- Medication for Orthostatic intolerance, and POTS.



- Treatment of underlying conditions like Ehler-Danlos Syndrome – connective tissue disorder similar in symptoms to OI.
- Getting your heart checked out for Cardiovascular disease or any anomalies.

We seem to get heart palpitations more with these conditions. They can be upsetting but be aware that stress as well as the above-mentioned physical issues can cause them, so breath.

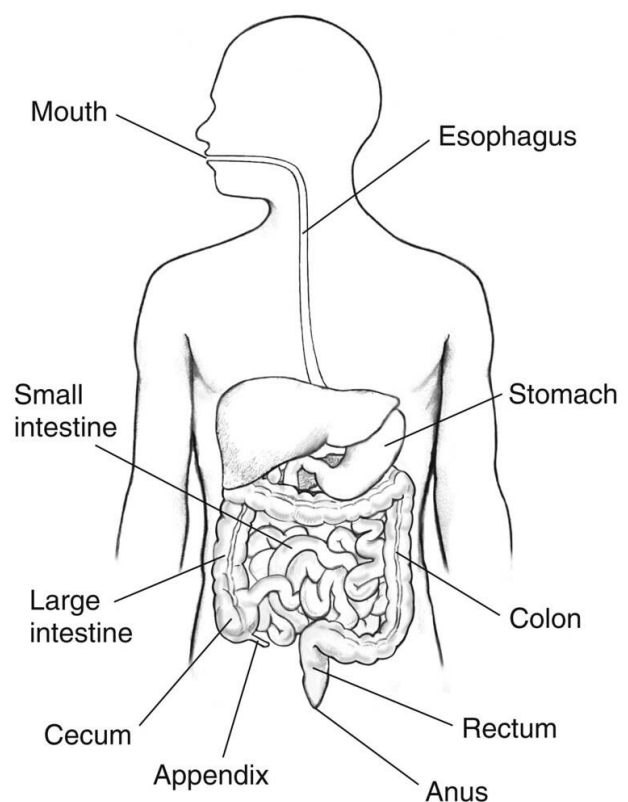
THE DIGESTIVE SYSTEM is a group of organs working together to convert food into energy and basic nutrients to feed the entire body. To achieve the goal of providing energy and nutrients to the body, six major functions take place in the digestive system: ingestion, secretion, mixing and movement, digestion, absorption and excretion.

Possible ME/CFS/FM Symptoms:

- Malabsorption
- Intolerance/allergies
- Indigestion
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Diarrhoea and Constipation
- Nausea and vomiting
- Increased risk of gastritis and other gut issues such as ulcers and colitis.
- Bloating
- Hypoglycaemia
- Leaky gut, candida, parasites – alternative perspectives

Possible Steps to Wellness:

- Calming the stress response aligned with improving gut health by diet change.
- Epsom Salt baths.
- Magnesium infused oil rubs.
- Through Gastrointestinal investigation by your GP for infections, appendicitis, diverticulitis.
- Consider what medication you take and their possible side effects, even if you have taken them for a long time.



'Consider elimination or rotational elimination diets with care (if you become worse under elimination diet protocols consider a simple moderate diet taken regularly). Eat small regular meals so there is less pressure on the body (it takes an enormous amount of energy to digest food). Decreasing fluid intake with meals assists the digestive process' Dr R. Vallings, CFS/ME Symptoms, Diagnosis and Management

The overactivity of the immune system (cytokines), chronic bowel infection and a bacterial imbalance may cause the majority of your gastro symptoms. Therefore over time if you can support the system it may return more to normal.

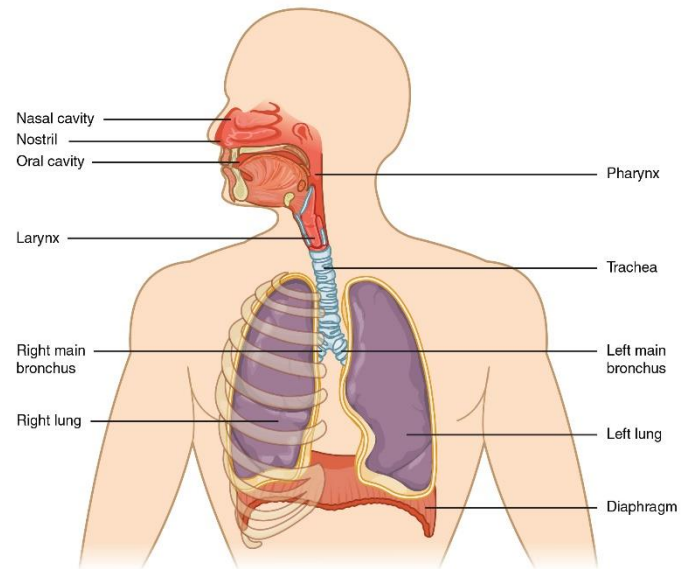
THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM: The cells of the human body require a constant stream of oxygen to stay alive. The respiratory system provides oxygen to the body's cells while removing carbon dioxide, a waste product that can be lethal if allowed to accumulate. Breathing is a reflex, inspiration (breathing in) is our natural reaction to low oxygen levels in the brain. The diaphragm moves with breathing and separates the lungs from the abdomen. The muscles that help to move the lungs are called the intercostal muscles, they are between the ribs and lung.

Possible ME/CFS/FM Symptoms:

- Shallow or laboured breathing
- Exacerbated asthmatic symptoms
- Hyperventilation syndrome
- Feeling like you are not able to breathe deeply.
- Any existing lung problems are made worse by ME/CFS.

Possible Steps to Wellness:

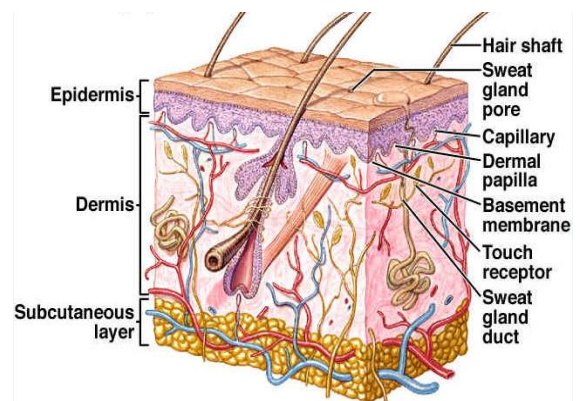
- Learning to breathe properly
- Breathing techniques.
- Restorative movement.
- Relaxation.
- Investigating sleep apnoea
- Ruling out other respiratory issues like infection, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), Bornholm disease, Shingles.
- Getting clear air to breath: opening windows, avoiding damp or mould, getting an indoor plant, going outside.
- Giving up smoking.



THE INTEGUMENTARY SYSTEM is a system of detoxification that consists of the hair, scalp, skin, and nails. Toxins are excreted from sweat and sweat glands during perspiration, primarily through the skin. The skin also helps to protect the body from damage and infections, regulate body temperature and moisture content, and produces melatonin and vitamin D from sunlight.

Possible ME/CFS/FM Symptoms:

- Eczema and psoriasis as a result of increased intolerances and allergies.
- Hair loss.
- Temperature dysregulation
- Nail ridges
- Nail infections
- Skin infections
- Rosacea
- Acne
- Rashes
- Hormonal problems



Possible Steps to Wellness:

- Skin conditions diagnosed and treated to reduce irritation
- A sensible amount of unfiltered light directly to the skin each day (for vitamin D absorption and melatonin release)
- Wear appropriate clothing day and night
- Reduce reactive chemicals.

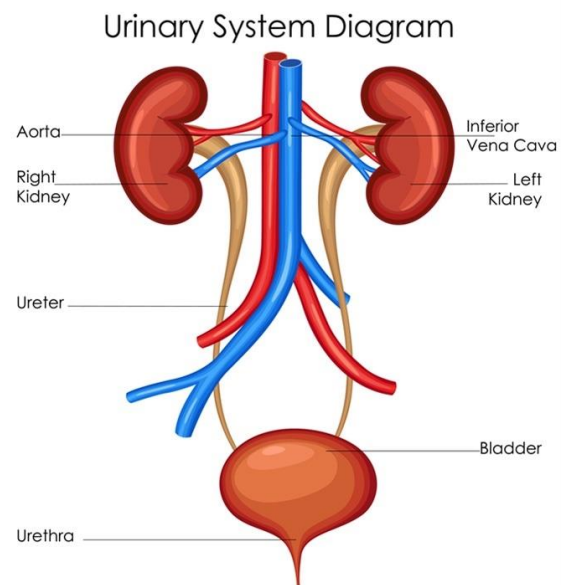
THE URINARY SYSTEM consists of the kidneys, ureters, urinary bladder, and urethra and acts as a plumbing system to filter the blood to remove wastes which are eliminated through the urine. Besides filtering and eliminating wastes from the body, the urinary system also maintains the homeostasis of water, ions, pH, blood pressure, calcium and red blood cells.

Possible ME/CFS/FM Symptoms:

- Oedema (fluid retention)
- Urinary tract infections
- Irritable bladder (causing frequency of urination)
- Reduced renal blood flow

Possible Steps to Wellness:

- See GP to explore orthodox and/or alternative avenues to support the Urinary System.
- Balanced diet and adequate fluid intake.
- Bladder retraining exercises.
- High protein diet to increase renal blood flow.
- Possibly diuretics for oedema



Making simple changes in your lifestyle can be the most powerful medicine when it comes to ME/CFS, such as

- Calming the stress response, inclusive of working through stressors, creating a healing and supportive environment, cognitive reframing for unhelpful thought processes, healthy distraction used for pain management, relaxation and breathing – Healthy Maintenance Practices
- Gentle movement and stretching - appropriate to where you are at with the condition
- Good quality, well-balanced nutritious diet
- Good quality sleep patterns
- Pacing – building more energy than you are using in a day
- Staying inspired and open to learn more about the reasons why you may have the symptoms that you do - there are very real biochemical reasons for the symptoms, even if those reasons fall outside of mainstream medical understanding at this point of time.

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