CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

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These three words are one of the new toys, as far as conventional medical thinking goes, attached to a set of symptoms that seems to be very popular these days. Headlines describe this complex as a disrupter of work and family and the new generational malaise. This syndrome entered our awareness (?) in the mid-1980’s when a mysterious illness with symptoms of an exhausting and never ending flu struck a small town in Nevada. Now we have wide spread support groups, volunteer and professional organizations and the government all united to combat this debilitating illness.

CFS is a complex of symptoms that show marked fatigue, exhaustion, poor stamina, neurological complaints and symptoms that resemble other “diseases”. Examples of diseases that may be CFS include but are not limited to mononucleosis, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, AIDS related complex, Lyme disease, post-polio syndrome and auto-immune diseases like lupus.

CFS symptoms come and go lasting for months to years and are extremely debilitating at times. There is pain, fatigue, fever, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, depression, intestinal discomfort (sounds like a medical book doesn’t it?). This syndrome has been called “yuppie flu” because most victims are white, educated professionals in their 20-40’s. There appears to be no discrimination although women under 45 appear to be the more susceptible.

The exact cause of CFS is unknown. It has been thought that Epstein-Barr virus (EBV) causing mononucleosis was responsible. EBV is present in 90% of American adults in active/latent form. Current reasoning is that active EBV is the result of CFS not the cause. This remains to be determined accurately.

The immune system is clearly affected in CFS with the malfunction expressing itself as an unregulated/overactive immune response characterized by head and body pain, migrating joint pain and reduction in natural killer immune cells that protect the body from viruses and cancer. Wide spread research is being undertaken to identify the fundamental agents that trigger this immune system dysfunction but like anything else just look at all levels of this so called modern society and how we live in it. Maybe the answers are there to be looked at directly but we look in the corners of the room.

Diagnosis is difficult because of the similarly of CFS with other diseases. There is, at present, no definitive test for CFS and doctors usually exclude other diseases and then being left with CFS decide that is the problem. CFS can be missed by physicians because of their biases. Fatigue, pain and depression are subjective symptoms and are not measured or seen in a blood or other test. If the symptoms of CFS can’t be found in the usual laboratory tests doctors tend to downplay the symptoms telling the patient (mainly women) it is “in his/her head”. After all if the patient tells the doctor he/she feels tired all the time where is the test to measure it? Doctors need tests to be able to diagnose. Remember they think we are only bodies! Yea right!!!

There is no conventional therapy for CFS although God knows many drugs are used by medical practitioners for the symptoms. These include but are not limited to Prozac, pain relievers ibuprofen and naproxen, gamma globulin, interferon and anything else available that might work.

The best therapy is to consult a holistic health care provider, particularly a homeopath, who will look at the totality of who and what you are and then treat you with the natural therapies you need to heal yourself. These natural therapies include homeopathy, acupuncture, herbs, glandular, nutrition (very important), detoxing, chiropractic, biofeedback, etc. They are used singularly or in combination to get you on the road back to wellness.

Two supplements that have been studied by nutritional physicians that seem to help are magnesium and malic acid. Malic acid, a fruit acid, transforms fat and glucose into energy. Forty % of people who try these supplements benefit from them. Both supplements should be taken with food and calcium is needed for proper metabolism of magnesium. The ratio of calcium to magnesium is 2 to 1.

Start with 200 mg of magnesium and slowly increase up to 600 mg or until relief of symptoms is felt. Malic acid is started at approximately 400-500 grams and gradually increased up to as much as 2400 grams. Increase magnesium and malic acid gradually to avoid gastro-intestinal upsets. Co Q10 is a powerful antioxidant that helps CFS at 10-30 mg per day. L-carnitine, an amino acid, 500-1000 mg per day helps to improve mental and physical fatigue. As always let your holistic practitioner be the final answer as to what and how much supplements you need and should take. Remember more is not always better.

The elimination of modern stimulants (caffeine, alcohol, smoking, drugs) will go a long way in relieving symptoms of CFS as these items are some of the causes of the symptoms. The diet changes should be in the area of getting rid of sugars, simple starches and carbohydrates, high fats and include plenty of fresh, organic fruits and vegetables (complex carbohydrates), adequate protein and essential fatty acids. Minimize if not eliminate chemicals, additives, pesticides and preservatives in your life.

 TO YOUR GOOD HEALTH

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