



Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a condition that affects 1% of the population. It is categorized by generalized fatigue that persists for 6 months or longer, and is more intense than would be expected, based on the effort a person regularly exerts. Although science has yet to yield a full understanding of the underlying cause(s) of CFS, many researchers suspect deficiencies of the aerobic energy, immune system, and gastrointestinal systems may be responsible for the functional impairment experienced in individuals with this condition.

Without treatment, CFS often leads to disability. With treatment, including physical therapy, the condition can be managed well, leading to an improved quality of life.

Signs and Symptoms

Research has identified several symptoms of CFS, including:

- Fatigue
- Generalized pain
- Frequent headaches
- Muscle weakness
- Cloudy thoughts and confusion
- Disturbed sleep
- Flu-like symptoms

How a Physical Therapist Can Help

Your physical therapist will work with you to develop a treatment plan to help ease your discomfort, and improve your ability to perform daily activities.

Your physical therapist also may check for other conditions, such as depression, and may refer you to specialists for comanagement of your symptoms. Physical therapist treatments may include:

- **Education.** Your physical therapist will teach you strategies to help conserve energy while performing your daily activities.
- **Movement and Strengthening Exercises.** Moving and exercising can improve your short-term endurance and strength, and reduce your pain. Your physical therapist will help you identify specific movements that will help reduce your specific symptoms.
- **Manual Therapy.** Manual (hands-on) therapy may be applied to manipulate or mobilize the skin, bones, and soft tissues to help reduce pain and improve movement.