

## **Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and M.E**

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), Post viral fatigue syndrome (PVFS) and Myalgic Encephomyelitis (M.E.) are illnesses that for years were treated with a great deal of scepticism by the medical profession, and even today a lot of myth and misdiagnosis surrounds them.

There is much confusion about CFS/ME/PVFS and their relationship to candidiasis. Opinions vary amongst practitioners as to whether P.V.F.S., C.F.S. and M.E. should be thought of as one illness or three separate illnesses. There is general agreement that candidiasis is an illness in its own right, and that all of these conditions can predispose the patient to candidiasis. It is not uncommon to find both illnesses in one patient.

For each patient the particular factors that may contribute to this syndrome need to be identified and dealt with through an appropriate herbal regime. There is no single herbal formula that can treat all aspects of this condition and treatment is often complex. This is best done under the guidance of a qualified Medical Herbalist who will approach the problem with a combination of botanical products and lifestyle advice. While at present there are no conventional treatments for patients suffering CFS other than the suggestion that antidepressants might help, herbal products have a unique ability to support the system.

### **Diet & Nutrition**

Dietary advice centres on supporting the immune function. Generally a good wholefood diet is to be recommended. Some patients may experience sensitivities to particular food groups and this is best dealt with by a practitioner. The most common sensitivities are to foods high in sugars and unrefined carbohydrates. Some patients also experience sensitivity to wheat and foods containing yeast. Often guidance with elimination diets and support in re-establishing correct eating patterns can help.

The following suggestions are for general guidance only. It is strongly recommended that patients suffering chronic conditions consult a Medical Herbalist, rather than trying to self-medicate.

### **Vitamin C**

Vitamin C is reputed to have anti-viral activity and is important in increasing general resistance to and recovery from infection. Especially rich sources of Vitamin C are citrus fruits, berries, green and leafy vegetables, tomatoes, cauliflower, potatoes and sweet potatoes.

### **Vitamin A and Beta-Carotene**

These are powerful natural antioxidants and are effective immune potentiators, showing notable anti-viral actions. They are found in oily fish, eggs and dairy products, liver, and in carrots, green and yellow vegetables such as spinach, watercress, sweet potatoes and yellow fruits such as mangoes.

### **Zinc**

This mineral works synergistically with Vitamin C to support enhanced immunity. It is found in herring, oysters, liver, eggs, seeds, nuts, fruit and vegetables.

### **Hemp seed oil**

Helps to support the systems of the body, and may help to ease muscle aches associated with chronic fatigue and M.E.

### **Magnesium**

There is much scientific interest focussed on this mineral and its role in CFS/ME. Rich food sources are figs, lemons, grapefruits and green leafy vegetables.

### **CoQ10**

This is naturally present in the body and is essential for the production of energy on a cellular level. It improves oxygen uptake, thereby alleviating fatigue symptoms.

These supplements may be taken individually; however a good quality multivitamin and mineral can help safeguard dietary levels of many of the above nutrients. Ask our Dispensary assistants for advice.

### **Lifestyle**

It is generally believed that rest is one of the most important factors in recovery from ME. Patients are advised to restrict their activities to the minimum as even such tasks as light housework can be tremendously taxing. A daily routine of afternoon rests and gentle activity, mental and physical, should be followed. Often patients with more serious cases of the syndrome are unable to continue their work. It is generally believed that rest is one of the most important factors in recovery, and appropriate counselling and support should be sought. The many challenges of this illness often lead to symptoms of depression and there are many herbal products that can support the system in facing those challenges.

## Self-Help

Self-treatment of these complex health problems is not recommended. An appointment with a Qualified Medical Herbalist is advisable.

It may well be that these health problems are the result of the way we live now, and the environment in which we live. However, throughout all of our history, humans have been subject to many different kinds of stress, and over the centuries it has been found that herbs are effective in helping us to face those stresses.

## Herbs

Useful herbs include:

- *Echinacea* – a supremely effective American Indian herb renowned for boosting our immune systems. This herb increases our resistance to bacteria and viruses.
- *Pau d'arco* – an immune stimulant and the herb of choice for *candida* which is often linked with M.E.
- *Withania* – helps our bodies to recover from viruses by fighting fatigue.
- *Gingko* - improves circulation and increase blood flow to the brain, promoting memory, clarity and concentration.
- *Garlic* – a powerful herb which helps us to fend off colds and infections. Can be taken daily in tablet form as a preventative.
- *Thyme*- contains borneol, a camphor-like substance, which cleanses the lungs, aids expectoration and improves our immune system.
- *Sage* – antiseptic action of sage stops bacterial invasion by acting on the throat and tonsils. Combines well with *garlic*, *thyme* and *echinacea*.
- *Elderflower* – reduces catarrh and irritation to the respiratory tract. Combine with *plantain*.

**As with all health problems, we strongly recommend that you consult a qualified medical herbalist to create a specific prescription and treatment plan to meet your individual needs.**

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