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CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Theoretical Causes of CFS: the true etiology of CFS is unknown, however there are multiple theories.

- *Epstein-Barr Virus* (or other infectious agents): EBV is the leading, though controversial, candidate for causative infectious agents in CFS. EBV is a herpes-family virus that the majority of the population comes in contact with. Most people will contact it sometime in childhood when the symptoms of infection are very mild. If an individual becomes infected as a teen or adult, they develop symptoms of mononucleosis. It is theorized that CFS is due to latent (dormant) EBV causing prolonged, mononucleosis-like symptoms of extreme fatigue. Other viruses have been proposed as the causative agent as well.
- *Immune System Abnormalities:* this theory is linked to the EBV theory in that individuals with a weakened immune system are unable to keep infections in remission, leading to symptoms of CFS. No specific immune dysfunction pattern has been recognized, however decreased number or activity of natural killer (NK) cells is the most consistent abnormality. Another finding is reduced lymphocyte activity (lymphocytes are white blood cells responsible for fighting viral infection). Another possibility with suppressed immune function is candida overgrowth in the GI tract; candidiasis can cause symptoms of extreme fatigue.
- *Other Major Causes:* these can include pre-existing physical conditions such as diabetes, Rheumatoid Arthritis, chronic inflammation and/or pain, hypothyroidism, MS, liver disease, cancer, heart or lung disease. Certain prescription drugs can cause fatigue as well as food allergies and sensitivities, anemia and nutritional deficiencies, sleep disturbances, and depression. Stress and low adrenal function and/or impaired liver function and chemical sensitivities can also cause chronic fatigue.

Treatment of CFS: treatment focuses on addressing underlying factors. A detailed history of the condition can help pinpoint more likely causes of CFS in a given individual. Areas of focus in treatment include:

- *Depression:* underlying depression is one of the major causes of chronic fatigue. Treatment approaches may include psychological counseling and/or nutritional and botanical therapy.
- *Stress:* stress management techniques and adrenal support through nutrition and/or supplementation.
- *Impaired Detoxification:* supporting the liver through cleanses & fasting, diet, and/or supplementation.
- *Impaired Immune Function:* immune support with nutrition, lifestyle, and supplementation.
- *Food Allergies:* diet diary and analysis of diet to determine if allergies and/or sensitivities exist, followed by avoidance of problem foods.
- *Testing for Underlying Physical Conditions:* depending on history, possibly testing for blood sugar abnormalities, hypothyroidism, adrenal function, etc.