

Ayurveda & Yoga Perspective of Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)

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Abstract— Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is a disorder characterized by the instant onset of severe unexplained fatigue, lasting six months or more. It is an excessive or exhausting fatigue of the body and mind. Exhausted feeling both physically and mentally associated with muscle pain or spasm, and deterioration of memory affect the day to day life. Chronic fatigue syndrome is a complicated disorder characterized by extreme fatigue that can't be explained by any underlying medical condition. Although the condition can affect any age group, it most commonly starts between the early 20s and mid 40s. Like many autoimmune conditions, it is twice as common in women. Ayurveda believes in removing the root cause of disease rather than just treating the symptoms. As a holistic health system comprising diet, Yoga, massage, detoxification, herbal remedies, meditation and daily lifestyle, Ayurveda improves not only a person's health, but also their well-being, behaviour and state of mind.

Index Terms: Ayurveda, Fatigue, Health, Lifestyle, Meditation, Memory, Pain, Yoga.

INTRODUCTION

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is also called myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) or ME/CFS. It is a complex, debilitating, long-term medical condition. The causes and mechanisms of the disease are not fully understood.^[1] More women than men get CFS.^[2] The illness can occur at any age, but most frequently in persons between the ages of 40 and 60.^[3] CFS is less prevalent among children and adolescents than among adults.^[4] Females are diagnosed about 1.5 to 2.0 times more often with CFS than males.^[5] An estimated 0.5% of children have CFS, and more adolescents are affected with the illness than younger children.^{[6]:182[7]} CFS reduces health, happiness, productivity, and can also cause socio-emotional disruptions such as loneliness and alienation,^[8] The World Health Organization classes chronic fatigue

syndrome as a central nervous system disease,^[9] and CFS as a neurological disease in the ICD-11 for Mortality and Morbidity Statistics (ICD-11).^[10]

Chronic fatigue syndrome means the fatigue persisting for more than 6 months without any transparent cause. There is no consensus on the cause of chronic fatigue syndrome but some viral infections and immunity problems are presumed to be associated with this disease. The symptoms include muscle pain, fatigue, short term loss of concentration and memory, headache, sleep disturbances etc.

According to Ayurveda the strength of the body is considered as Oja (vital energy). It is responsible for proper functioning and stamina for our bodily and mental functions. The immunity of the individual gets low causing fatigue like symptoms with Improper digestion, improper absorption and elimination along with sleep deprivation and addiction to harmful substances like alcohol, smoking, tobacco, tea etc produce bad effects on Oja. The cause of chronic fatigue syndrome is unknown.^[11] There are many theories — ranging from viral infections to psychological stress. Some Expert believe chronic fatigue syndrome might be activated by a combination of factors. There's no single test to confirm a diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome. The treatment for chronic fatigue syndrome focuses on relief in symptoms.

SYMPTOMS

The severity of symptoms and disability is the same regardless of gender,^[12] and many experience strongly disabling chronic pain.^[13] There are general symptoms of CFS as given below:

- Fatigue
- Loss of memory or concentration
- Sore throat

- Enlarged lymph nodes in your neck or armpits
- Unexplained muscle pain
- Pain that moves from one joint to another without swelling or redness
- Headache
- Disturbed sleep
- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Chills and night sweats
- Shortness of breath
- Irregular heartbeat

No special laboratory abnormalities are approved to diagnose CFS; while physical abnormalities can be found, no single finding is considered sufficient for diagnosis.^{[14][15]} Blood, urine, and other tests are used to rule out other conditions that could be responsible for the symptoms.^{[16][17][18]}

AYURVEDA PERSPECTIVE

According to Ayurveda the disease to aggravated *vata dosha* and decreased *agni* which leads to strength deprivation. Aggravated *vata* generates negative impact at the physical and mental levels. Severe fatigue feelings, muscle cramps and pains are signs of aggravated *vata dosha*, as also are weakness of nervous system, sleep disturbances, cognitive dysfunctions.

The Ayurvedic line of CFS treatment means the balancing of *vata dosha* and enhancing *agni*. Treatments includes *Deepan pachan therapy*, *Srothoshodhanam* and *Balyakara therapy*. *Panchakarma therapy* as per the conditions. Because chronic fatigue syndrome affects people in many different ways, our treatment will be tailored to the specific set of symptoms and to improve the quality of life. There are some herbs to manage chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS):

- Triphala (*Emblica officinalis*, *Terminalia bellerica* and *Terminalia chebula*) helps regulate excess *Pitta* in the body as well as eliminating toxins.
- Shatavari (*Asparagus racemosus*) also reduces excess *Pitta*.
- Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) helps to prevent bouts of tiredness.
- Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*) helps to calm and strengthen the nervous system.

DIETARY REGIMEN

The best nutrient for chronic fatigue syndrome must come from a varied diet selected from the basic food groups to ensure an adequate nutrient intake and to reach and maintain a reasonable body weight.

- *Vata* pacifying diet such as warm, moist, sweet, sour and salty food
- Include enough quantity of milk, pure ghee and milk products in food.
- Chyawanprash (a ayurvedic food supplement) is recommended as it helps to get rid of toxins and boosts the immune system. Take with hot water
- It is important to stay hydrated - drink plenty of fluids
- Avoid excess of spicy and sour foods
- To stimulate the digestive fire drink grated ginger in lemon juice
- Eat almonds (five every morning that have been soaked in water overnight and peeled) daily as they help strengthen the immune system.
- Eat fresh fruits like banana and melons, and dry fruits like dates and walnuts, which reduce aggravated *vata*.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- Reduce stress.
- Develop a plan to avoid or limit overexertion and emotional stress. Allow yourself time each day to relax.
- Improve sleep routine (Get enough sleep each night and develop a proper sleeping routine).
- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Limit daytime napping.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and nicotine.
- Keep your activity on equal level. If you do too much on your good days, you may have more bad
- Whole body massages - Abhyanga will help to restore energy
- Marma Massage (Ayurvedic Energy Point Massage) and Shirodhara are known to improve conditions of CFS
- Yoga, Pranayama and meditation also help in controlling over aggravated *vata* and combat the fatigue

YOGA PERSPECTIVE

Yoga is one of the most commonly accepted mind/body therapies of complementary and alternative medicine and is recommended as an alternative therapy for improving unexplained chronic fatigue.^[19] Mental and physical fatigue can be reduced by asana practice, which rests the brain and rejuvenates the body and the mind. The best breathing exercises are alternate nostril breathing (Anuloma Viloma Pranayama), breath of fire, left nostril breathing, right nostril breathing. As the breath becomes easier, the body feels light and the mind feels fresh. As oxygen helps to flush out lactic acid (may also be the cause of tiredness) doing daily breathing exercises are recommended in Ayurveda. Several Yoga postures recommend to rejuvenate the systems are:

- Setu Bandha Sarvangasana or Bridge Pose
- Sukhasana or sitting cross legged
- Surya Namaskar or Sun Salutation
- Shavasana or Corpse Pose
- Balasana or Child Pose
- Bhujangasana or Cobra Pose
- Chakrasana or Wheel Pose
- Padma Sadhna or Lotus Meditation

Meditation can also help treat sufferers of chronic fatigue syndrome by relieving stress, enhancing the immune system and managing retains of energy. With meditation, sick persons can find happy even in times of low personal energy.

CONCLUSION

Ayurveda and yoga is practicable and that it can relieve the fatigue and pain of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). Overall daily lifestyle intervention may improve clinical condition and personality in patients with CFS. Following a healthy diet is one of the pillars of good health. It is equally important that you're eating routines are kept in check. These two factors work in harmony with others to maintain long-term dosha balance.

"Ayurveda views food as medicine, and the kitchen as a pharmacy".

If practiced yoga regularly in the right manner, they can go beyond fighting fatigue to bringing extraordinary energy levels to your body. It is truly ancient wisdom prescribed in our Vedas which provide a long-term solution to fighting fatigue.

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