# ME (or Chronic Fatigue Syndrome)

## What is ME?

ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis) is also sometimes referred to as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). It can affect people of any age but is most common between the ages of 25 and 45 and can last for months or even years.

It is estimated that around 150, 000 people in the UK have ME, with women affected more often than men. The main symptom of ME is chronic tiredness or exhaustion which does not go away with sleep or rest. However, there can be many other symptoms in addition to this, which can range from mild to severe.

You may find it useful to read Action for ME's information guides **All about ME.**

## Symptoms

In addition to chronic fatigue, an early sign of ME is feeling ill after exertion, in some cases to the point of collapse. Exercise can produce not just exhaustion, but further illness. This typically includes pain, and neurological symptoms such as difficulties with thinking, counting or talking. Other symptoms include:

- Muscular pain, joint pain, and severe headaches
- Poor short-term memory and concentration
- Difficulty organising your thoughts and finding the right words
- Painful lymph nodes – this is often felt as tender, glandular swelling around your throat
- Stomach pain and other problems similar to irritable bowel syndrome – for example bloating, constipation, diarrhoea and nausea
- Sore throat
- Sleeping problems, such as insomnia and disturbed sleep
- Sensitivity or intolerance to light, loud noise, alcohol and certain foods
- Additional, less common symptoms, such as dizziness, excessive sweating, balance problems and difficulty controlling body temperature
- Psychological difficulties, such as depression, irritability and panic attacks may also occur

There is no known cause for ME, but it is thought that viral infections such as glandular fever can trigger the condition, as they weaken the immune system. It is also thought that stress or depression can contribute to the condition, and traumatic events such as bereavement, divorce or redundancy.

## Treatment

There is no cure for ME and no specific treatment. However, it is thought that the following treatments may help to ease the symptoms:

- Painkillers for muscle pain and headaches
- Anti-depressants
- Graded exercise
- Healthy diet
- Complementary therapies
- Cognitive behavioural therapy or counselling

You may it find it useful to read our sections on:

- **Healthy eating and drinking**,
- **Complementary therapies** and
- **Keeping physically active**.

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## Other Useful Information

- **The Patient Information Centre** has a searchable database of over 17,000 health resources in more than 60 languages.
- **ME Association**
- **Action for ME**
- **25% ME Group** – Information, advice and support for those suffering from severe ME.
- **NHS.UK**
- **Healthtalk.org**

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# Useful Organisations

## Patient Information Centre – Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW)

**Website:** www.cntw.nhs.uk

**Telephone:** 0191 246 7288

**Address:** St Nicholas Hospital, NE3 3XT

## ME Association

**Email:** meconnect@meassociation.org.uk

**Website:** www.meassociation.org.uk

**Telephone:** 01280 818 968

### Action for ME

**Email:** admin@actionforme.org.uk

**Website:** www.actionforme.org.uk

**Telephone:** 0117 927 9551

**Address:** 42 Temple Street,, BS31 1EH

### NHS

**Website:** www.nhs.uk

**Telephone:** 0117 927 9551

### healthtalk.org

**Email:** info@healthtalkonline.org

**Website:** www.healthtalk.org

**Telephone:** 0117 927 9551

### The 25% ME Group

**Email:** enquiry@25megroup.org

**Website:** www.25megroup.org

**Telephone:** 01292 318 611

**Address:** 21 Church Street, KA10 6HT

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## Related Articles

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Being diagnosed

Introduction to Complementary Therapies

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Healthy eating and drinking

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