

# Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: There is Hope!

by Terry Willard Ph.D.

## **Abstract**

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is a major health concern costing our society millions of people-hours and billions of dollars annually. CFS affects some of the most productive people in our society. The average person takes 2 - 5 years to recover. Approximately 50% can not work for much of that interval. The rest suffer a severely lowered level of productivity, with many absentee days. Approximately 30% have extended periods where they are unable to carry on ordinary domestic duties. In this article we will discuss the target population, the six phases of the syndrome, a hypothesis of its cause(s), stress factors associated with CFS, along with a treatment protocol.

I feel that by adopting a herbal, nutrient and counselling approach for the CFS sufferer, the recovery period can be reduced to one-fifth the average with increased energy and thus more productivity.

## **Syndrome, What Syndrome?**

Is there any relief for the sufferers of a mysterious syndrome which knocks healthy people down in the prime of life? The present medical treatment — three to five years of rest — is hardly an acceptable solution. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (a group of symptoms) is highlighted by bone-deep fatigue, poor memory, miserable sleep patterns and fluctuating emotional states. Natural remedies may offer something positive in a situation where the medical community can't even agree on a name for the syndrome. We will call it Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) for the moment.

One interesting thing about this CFS is its apparent selectivity. Some accounts suggest that 60 - 80% of the people who have this problem are busy career women, 30 - 50 years old, in the prime of health. There are blue collar workers and men suffering from CF syndrome, but at this point, most of the reported cases still are found among successful women. They are commonly semi-workaholics (usually by necessity) with frequent deadlines, or some other stress-inducing aspect to their work. These people are usually involved in a fitness program such as aerobic exercise. They also seem to have above-average sensitivity but keep that sensitivity private and under internal control. Often this person also has a "Type A" personality. Women in high stress jobs don't seem to have heart attacks like men, but they do seem to get compromised immune systems. Scientific research of the last decade has shown

conclusively that the female immune system operates quite differently than the male.

From a holistic point of view, this disease attacks the very core of a person's vital energy system and many patients actually use similar analogies. They will describe CFS as an entity that sucks all the energy out of them. They feel as if they were dead and just performing the barest of mechanical functions necessary to be considered alive. Some patients have to stay in bed for three days if they undertake the "extravagance" of going to see a movie. Others find it a real effort to brush their teeth. Researchers do know that once CFS gets out of hand it is very hard to reverse.

CFS can be summed up as a **psychoneuroimmunologic** disorder, meaning it has aspects affecting the following three areas:

**Psychology** — affecting emotions and thinking of the patient.

**Neurology** — chemically affecting the brain itself.

**Immunology** — affecting the body's immune system.

## **A Hypothesis**

No firm conclusion about the nature of CFS can be made at this early stage of scientific and intuitive investigation. Observation of CFS patients over the last four — six years, however, provides enough data to offer an initial hypothesis.

It seems that the people afflicted with this problem first get themselves in a 'wound up' state as a result of stress. They internalize the stress and the internalization seems to overactivate the body systems — a generalized hyperactivity. The person rapidly "wears out" and moves on to a 'hypoactive state' of exhaustion. In some people, especially women, this leads to a weakened immune system. Opportunistic organisms take advantage of reduced resistance to attack the body.

Such attacks cause more stress on the system and creates a negative feedback loop that makes the overall problem much worse. It seems that the continuing internal stress sets up a vibrational message, similar to a radio signal, that confuses the internal communication system of the body. One major result is an upset in sleeping patterns. Often if the sleeping problems can be overcome, the other symptoms are reduced considerably.

In a devitalized state, CFS patients can't do much but rest. Unfortunately most rest only physically. The same "tunnel vision" they brought to their physical activity now shifts to the emotional and mental realms, continuing the cycle of devitalization. They are still over working, but this time on an emotional and mental level. This concentrates the stress levels on the limbic system, most particularly the pituitary, furthering the problem in a seemingly endless cycle.

One of the best therapies for these people (and often the hardest thing for them to do) is to literally become a couch potato, to sit in front of the T.V. or read a mundane novel. Strangely enough, though most of the population is too sedentary and doesn't exercise enough, for these people it is the opposite. The key is to reduce the internal pace and well as the external.

When CFS patients start to gain their energy and want to exercise, we suggest exercise like stretching, yoga, tai chi, or perhaps using light weights, but certainly nothing that is aerobic in nature. Nothing that increases pulse rate or breathing greatly. In a vitalized state aerobic exercise gives energy, in a devitalized state it drains energy.

The most important thing to do is rest: physically, emotionally and mentally. To revitalize the body and spread the concentration of energy throughout the being. The diffusion of energy is something the body will do naturally.

Unfortunately, the CFS patient often wants to "help it along". 'You don't get anything in life without hard work', could be a motto for CFS sufferers. It just doesn't fit here. The opposite is the case. You can't push a river. Nature takes its own course.

In this case, the best way to help is to leave well enough alone. Botanical products, however, have been shown to speed up the revitalization process. Besides the herbal therapy that follows, one has to consider if there is a candida infection, as 60% of the CFS patients seem to also need a program which handles candida.

### **Treatment For Chronic Fatigue Syndrome**

The core of a program can be satisfied with the following six supplements:

1. Vitamin/Herbal Formula (2 tablets - 3 times daily) consisting of Echinacea, Ginger, Beta-carotene, B6, Vitamin C, Zinc.
2. Energy/Stress Tonic (8 tablets - 3 times daily). Shih Chuan Ta Pu Wan
3. Reishi Plus (2 capsules - 3 times daily) consisting of Reishi, Reishi mycelium, Skullcap.
4. Chlorella (5 tablets - 3 times daily)
5. CFS Formula - Echinacea, Astragalus, Licorice, Reishi, Skullcap and Barberry.
6. Essential Fatty Acids (2 capsules - 3 times daily) Evening Primrose Oil, Flaxseed Oil and Borage Oil.

The actions of each of these supplements can be briefly summarized as follows:

#### **1. Vitamin/Herbal Formula** (2 tablets - 3 times daily)

##### **Echinacea**

This plant is known for its anti-inflammatory activity, to accelerate wound healing, treat viral infections, stimulate the immune system and has been found useful in urology, gynecology, internal medicine and dermatology.

Echinacea sp. possess antibiotic activity, have a cortisone-like activity, inhibit hyaluronidase enzyme activity and activate macrophages.

The immuno-stimulatory action is credited to echinacea's inulin content. Besides the antitumour

lipid component of echinacea, echinacin has been found to have antiviral activity. *E. purpurea* root extract has been shown to have interferon-like activity.

### **Skullcap**

Used heavily at the turn of the century for a similar disease Neurasthenia, skullcap has a relaxing effect on the nervous system. It is excellent for insomnia and muscle spasms. Skullcap also has anti-inflammatory activity, specifically working on neuro-muscular problem often associated with CFS.

### **Beta Carotene**

Although Beta carotene is also called pro-vitamin A, its usefulness extends far beyond its pro-vitamin A function. It has all of the benefits of vitamin A with much less risk of toxicity (reached at twenty-five times the dosage listed above).

Beta carotene's anti-oxidant qualities are many times more potent than vitamin A or E. Beta carotene intake has been shown to greatly reduce the rate of cancer involving epithelial cells. Beta carotene has been shown to increase maximal life-span potential. Beta carotene has been shown to be one of the most active substances for regulating the immune system.

### **Pyridoxine (B6)**

Depression is a real problem in this syndrome, with significantly lower pyridoxine in these depressed individuals. It is well known that low pyridoxine can lead to psychological problems. This seems to be even more significant in women who take oral contraceptives.

B6 deficiency inhibits cell-mediated immune function as well as humeral responsiveness to a variety of test antigens. Studies suggest the deficiency results in a reduction in number and function of both T and B lymphocytes, reduced delayed hypersensitivity responses, reduced thymic epithelial cell function, decreased secretion of immunoglobulins, reduced phagocytic activity of neutrophils and greatly diminished response to antigenic challenge, in patients with pyridoxine deficiencies.

### **Vitamin C**

Vitamin C is necessary for proper function of the immune system. We can basically say that vitamin C is the factor that pulls back the hammer on the gun of the immune system. It interacts in many of the biochemical pathways reviewed in

this report and seems to increase the function of the zinc against herpes type viruses. We suggest that additional Vitamin C (5-10gm) be consumed along with this program.

### **Zinc**

Zinc has been shown to be a significant immune system modulator. While excessive amounts (150 mg. twice daily) have been shown to depress the immune system, deficiency will also depress the immune system. The deficiency produces lowered thymic hormone activity, host defense mechanism, including T cell response and chemotaxis of neutrophils.

## **2. Energy/Stress Tonic**

(8 tablets - 3 times daily)

This formula (Shih Chuan Ta Pu Wan) is derived from a classical Chinese formula used for stress and fatigue. The ten ingredients are designed to reduce fatigue, ease stress, well improve energy. Several of the ingredients are well known to enhance the immune system, reduce insomnia and revitalize the body. These herbs work at the fundamental level of 'tuning up' the endocrine system in a tonic way.

## **3. Reishi/LEM plus**

(2 capsules - 3 times daily)

By aiding in deeper sleep patterns and relaxing the nervous system, this formula both help relax the taker, while energizes them. Some of the active ingredient have strong immune modulating functions.

### **Reishi**

Reishi also known as Ling Zhi in China, it has been consider number one of the higher herbs since 56 B.C. (Shen Nug Tsao Ching). It has been used for nourishing, supplementing, toning, removing toxins, dispersing accumulation and is indicated for fatigue, allergies, neurasthenia, nervousness, dizziness, insomnia, chronic hepatitis, nephritis, bronchial asthma, pneumonia, stomach disease, coronary heart disease, angina, cancer and for enhancing longevity

The effect of Reishi on the nervous system has been shown to have a calming effect, aiding in insomnia, paranoia, and working as a nervous expectorant. As an anti-oxidant, Reishi has been shown to scavenge hydroxyl radicals in blood plasma and is probably one of the reasons for the traditional claims that it is the most potent longevity herb.

## LEM

A special extract of Shiitake Mycelium (*Lenitinus edodes*) has been shown to have hyperoxygenator activity. This provides it with a very strong antiviral function. It is also a well-documented support for the immune system. Using LEM on several patient has provided us with much more encouraging results than straight Shiitake.

## Ginger

Ginger is a diffuse stimulant, aiding in keeping circulation going. One of the problems with CFS is that of stagnancy.

This quality lowers muscular pain, while rejuvenating the body. Ginger has been shown to be anti-microbial against a large range of bacteria, viruses and fungi.

## 4. Chlorella,

5 tablets - 3 times daily

It has been shown that the hot extract of chlorella stimulates the production of interferon. The substance responsible for this is known as chlorellan which resides in the chemical group of very large branched polysaccharides. This group has been receiving great attention lately for their interferon stimulating qualities. This substance stimulated macrophage activity, thus functioning as an immune stimulant. There are many other papers that have been written on the immuno-stimulatory effect of chlorella.

Chlorella was first found to be very effective against viruses in a lipid coat in 1967. Its anti-viral factors were shown to stimulate both B and T cells. Chlorella has been shown to be specific for EBC and CMV.

## 5. CPS Formula

**Astragalus** (Milk Vetch) is an Oriental herb that has been used for centuries to build energy in the system. Its Chinese name translates as "Yellow Qi (energy)," meaning that it builds energy while working as a mild antibiotic. The specific area of influence of this herb is the lungs and spleen. Its energy building qualities have been indicated by increasing body weight and

prolonging swimming time in mice. By feeding mice milk vetch, their glycogen (energy) supplies in the liver were protected from the environmental toxicity of carbon tetrachloride. Milk Vetch has been shown to have cardiogenic effect by significantly lowering blood pressure in dogs, cats and rabbits by dilating blood vessels. It also increases the contraction of normal hearts, having a more dramatic effect in hearts exhausted by fatigue or poisons. In vitro studies have shown this herb to have antimicrobial effect against *Shigella dysenteriae*, *Streptococcus haemolyticus*, *Diplococcus pneumonia* and *Staphylococcus aureus*. As a diuretic it has been shown to increase urine flow and to treat kidney and bladder infections.

## Licorice

Licorice is the most used herb in China. It has traditionally been used to promote energy (qi), remove toxins, moisten lungs, control colds, calm down spastic muscle and as the great antidote. Licorice have very distinct effect on the endocrine system, especially the adrenal gland, being shown to regulate both the duration and manufacture of the bodies' own cortisone. It also has been shown to stimulate hormone production from the pituitary. One of the components has significant aldosterone-like effects, decreasing urine output, sodium output, while increasing potassium output. Licorice has been effective in treating Addison's disease. Two of the major chemical in licorice have been shown to induce interferon. This of course stops the binding mechanism of most viruses and blocks the transcription of viral DNA. We will also get an increase in killer cell associated with this process. Licorice has been shown to directly inhibit many viruses' growth including the members of the herpes family. Current reports have verified licorices' anti-viral properties, being most effective against lymphocyte viruses, including HIV. Licorice is also very beneficial in stopping immuno-suppression. The detoxifying effect of this herb has been shown to reduce dramatically the effect of toxic bacteria (diphtherin, tetanin), poisonous food, drugs, and toxin of metabolic products. The list of pharmaceutically and clinically tested applications is long and impressive including diabetes, PMS, inflammatory diseases, pulmonary tuberculosis, asthma, allergies, ulcers,

atherosclerosis, lowering bilirubins, anti-neoplastic, and antispasmodic.

### **Barberry**

Barberry has a wide spectrum anti-microbial action on bacteria, virus and especially fungi. It is also immuno-modulating, stimulating to the heart and cleansing to the liver.

### **6. Essential Fatty Acids Omega-3,-6,-9, 2 capsules – 3 times daily**

In the latter stages of CFS, especially Encephalomyelitis (ME) form, the body starts to have a deficiency of essential fatty acids (EFA). This is most dramatically seen in the brain. The EFAs are here to assure adequate supply so there will be little problem of brain shrinkage due to lack of oils. The above blend of omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids will insure adequate oils to stop or reverse this process. Essential fatty acids are templates for biomembranes and precursors for prosta-glandins, necessary to reduce inflammation. We can not synthesize EFA and must obtain them from our diet.



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Dr. Willard is the President of the Canadian Association of Herbal Practitioners and was appointed to the Canadian Expert Advisory Committee on Herbs and Botanical Preparations since 1985.

**Wild Rose College of Natural Healing** offers a large range of both classroom and correspondence courses, with two diplomas in Herbology.

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