

**Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/  
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)**

**School Fact Sheet  
For Parents, Educators, and School  
Nurses**

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# Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) School Fact Sheet

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## SYMPTOMS

- Post-exertional malaise characterized by the loss of both physical and mental stamina
- Sleep Dysfunction - non-refreshing/disturbed sleep
- Lack of cognitive focus (Brain fog)
- Chronic joint/muscle pains and aches
- Headaches of new onset or severity
- Swollen glands, recurrent sore throat, recurrent flu-like symptoms, new sensitivities to food and/or medications
- Neurological/Cognitive Manifestations: confusion, impairment of concentration and short-term memory consolidation, disorientation, difficulty with information processing, categorizing and word retrieval, and perceptual and sensory disturbances
- *Neuroendocrine Manifestations:* loss of thermoregulation stability – subnormal body temperature and marked diurnal fluctuation, sweating episodes, recurrent feelings of feverishness and cold extremities; intolerance of extremes of heat and cold;
- *Autonomic Manifestations:* orthostatic intolerance - neurally mediated hypotension (NMH), postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS).

## ABOUT THE ILLNESS

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) is a disabling, chronic disease characterized by the body's inability to produce sufficient energy for normal everyday activities. As many as 1 million Americans, many of them children, suffer from this disease.

As an illness diagnosed by exclusion, and with no known cause, there is no single, confirming test. ME/CFS is not a psychological illness, however, though depression and anxiety can occur as it does in other chronic illnesses.

Children with ME/CFS experience debilitating fatigue and malaise (feeling ill) after minimal mental or physical exertion, unexplained by any other underlying medical condition. Symptoms and levels of fatigue change unpredictably from day to day or week to week; all can be exacerbated by stress or exertion; persist for hours, days or weeks; and are not relieved by rest.

Post-exertional malaise is characterized by the loss of physical and mental stamina, substantially reducing the ability to take part in personal, educational, or social activities. Children suffer from lack of cognitive focus and confusion ("brain fog"); non-refreshing or disturbed sleep; light-headedness; and a multitude of painful conditions.

Additional symptoms may include orthostatic intolerance (changing from a standing or sitting position results in becoming light-headed and/or passing out), dizziness, light-headedness and extreme pallor. Students may have difficulty regulating body temperature, and develop intolerance to heat and/or cold; some develop new allergies or have a change in the status of old ones, experience gastrointestinal symptoms, non-refreshing sleep, and pain (myofascial, joint, and/or abdominal) including swollen glands, a sore throat, and headaches.

Neurological and cognitive symptoms ("brain fog") include confusion; difficulty with concentration and processing information; short-term memory deficits; and impaired word retrieval. Many individuals also experience hypersensitivity to light, noise, touch, and/or odors.

There is no single treatment for ME/CFS. Treatment is for symptoms only, and that differs from individual to individual. Many children do not look ill, but they may appear very pale. (ME/CFS in Children and Adolescents, 2017)

[Dr. Faith Newton, Delaware State University, 2017](#)