



Important Things To Know About Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) And Sleep

- Strong feelings of fatigue that don't go away are the main symptom of CFS. Fatigue tends to be worse after an activity (physical or mental).
- The fatigue of CFS is not the same as sleepiness. However, people with CFS often sleep poorly, need to take naps and sleep for longer periods than others.
- Even if a person with CFS has had many hours of sleep, they tend not to feel refreshed when they wake up.
- Getting enough sleep is important.

Are people with CFS just tired?

People with CFS are more than “just tired.” They suffer from an intense fatigue and exhaustion that won't go away. Physical or mental activity can make their CFS symptoms worse. To recover, the person must rest for longer than usual. People with CFS have less energy to do everyday tasks. This can apply to both physical things (e.g. to go for a walk), and mental things (e.g. to focus at work).

This is not the same as feeling sleepy during the day. People with CFS feel fatigue rather than sleepiness. People who feel as though they could fall asleep at any time may have different issues, see [Excessive Daytime Sleepiness](#). This is not the same as CFS.

It is not uncommon for CFS patients to sleep for periods of 12 hours or longer. But even if they sleep for this long, they still don't feel refreshed. Some have headaches when they wake up. For many people with CFS, it can help if they sleep in and nap during the day. This helps them to control their feelings of exhaustion and get back some of their energy. This assists in performing daily tasks.

Can people with CFS also have sleep problems?

Some people with CFS have sleep difficulties as well. These can include finding it hard to get to sleep, waking up often during the night and/or waking up too early in the morning. Having a bad night of sleep can make it harder to remember things. It can also be harder to focus on tasks and increases moodiness or irritability. Poor sleep can also increase sensitivity to pain. For people with CFS, poor sleep can make the feelings of being fatigued even worse. It can help to obtain as much sleep as possible. However, it is important to avoid sleeping in in the morning and then going to bed late at night. This pattern - [Delayed Sleep Phase Disorder](#) - has its own problems.

What happens if you don't get enough sleep?

Sleep deprivation can be a big problem for people with CFS. It can make your symptoms worse and delay recovery from CFS. CFS sufferers should try to have at least 8 to 9 hours of sleep every day. If a late night is planned, a nap during the day is good preparation.

How can you improve your sleep?

Most people with CFS find that their sleep improves when the other CFS symptoms start to improve. If you find it hard to go to sleep at night, your “sleep hygiene” may need some work. See [Good Sleep Habits](#) for a list of things that can help.

Where can I find out more?

Talk with your doctor if you are concerned about your sleep problems.

More information about sleep in CFS can be found at:
www.cdc.gov/cfs/toolkit/sleep.html

More CFS resources can be found on the ME/CFS Australia website at: www.mecfs.org.au or at the US website at:
www.cfids.org/default.asp.

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The peak national association of clinicians and scientists devoted to investigation of sleep and its disorders

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Ongoing concerns about sleep or other medical conditions should be discussed with your local doctor.

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