

From University of Newcastle NSW

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/service/disability/info-sheets/chronic-fatigue.html>

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Disability Information Sheet

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Overview

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (also known as Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis and Post Viral Syndrome) is a chronic and often extremely debilitating illness. It is characterised by extreme fatigue and exhaustion, poor stamina, poor concentration, joint and muscle aches, unrefreshing sleeps, tender lymph nodes, headaches and sometimes sore throats and other flu-like symptoms.

The symptoms vary from person to person as does the severity. Symptoms can come and go and can vary in intensity from day to day and sometimes from hour to hour.

Effects of the condition

Further to the symptoms described above, a person with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome may also experience:

- Cognitive problems (short-term memory problems)
- Word-finding difficulties and inability to calculate numbers
- Inability to comprehend/retain what is read
- Slurring of speech
- Vision disturbances - blurring sensitivity to light, eye pain
- Psychological problems, depression, irritability, anxiety, panic attacks, personality changes, mood swings
- Low grade fever, night chills or sweats, shortness of breath, dizziness and balance problems
- Irritable bowel - abdominal pain, diarrhoea
- Alcohol intolerance
- Numbness, tingling or burning sensations in the extremities
- Menstrual problems - including irregular bleeding, PMS, endometriosis
- Chest pains, rashes, ringing in the ears
- Allergies and sensitivities to odours, chemicals and medications

This can lead to:

- Difficulty keeping to deadlines
- Lateness for appointments or inability to keep appointments
- Difficulty to concentrate or participate in class discussions
- Inability to maintain a full-time work or study workload

Appropriate adjustments in the tertiary education environment

As each student will have different needs, it is important to negotiate these needs on an individual basis.

The following is a list of adjustments that may assist the student.

General

- Make book and reading lists available prior to the commencement of lectures (preferably at least two weeks prior to the commencement of the semester)
- Provide students with chapter outlines or study guides. These should also be available at least two weeks prior to the commencement of semester
- Where possible, provide any written work in electronic format - either in an accessible format on the web, or on disk. This allows the student to reproduce the material in alternative formats (eg large print, alternative colour print and background, via screen readers)
- If possible, meet with the student prior to, or early in the semester. Discuss the student's needs and attempt to accommodate these needs in lectures and assessment criteria

Lecture/classroom adjustments

- Use a variety of teaching methods (eg use overheads, videos, handouts, study sheets, group participation, Q&A)
- Have print copies of overheads available for students prior to the commencement of lectures
- Repeat and rephrase important points
- Speak clearly and face the students whenever talking
- Always verbalise any points that are either written on the board or put up on overheads
- Use a microphone whenever the equipment is provided
- Tape lectures and place in the library so students are able to copy
- Use simple language and stay on topic
- Whenever new processes or procedures are introduced, or whenever directions are given, ensure that stages or sequences are made clear and are explained verbally as well as in written format
- Present information on a range of formats - handouts, worksheets, overheads, videos, using diagrams, lists, flow charts, etc
- Have regular breaks in long lectures - this will assist to prevent 'information overload'
- Avoid putting the student on the spot by targeting them for questions or reading aloud in class - unless the student has indicated their willingness to participate (i.e. raised hand etc)
- Be flexible in relation to 'participation' in tutorials. The student may feel fatigued and may avoid participating in discussions during tutorials
- Supply comprehensive lecture notes
- At the beginning of each lecture, outline the key points that will be raised in the lecture reiterate these and at the conclusion of the lecture
- Try and make sure there is good lighting in the lecture theatre/class room. If possible adjust blinds to ensure there is no glare on the board or where overheads are being projected
- Attempt to keep extraneous sound and visual stimuli to a minimum

Assignments

- Be flexible with deadlines and extensions
- Provide clear feedback to the student both verbally and in writing
- Consider negotiating an individual learning program for students with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. This can include:
 - Flexible deadlines for assignments to take into account the effects of their disability and the requirements of other subjects

- Alternative marking arrangements such as allowing the student to hand in a 'draft' for comment prior to submitting their final paper
- Consider setting alternative assignments (of commensurate level) where a student can work on a few selected texts rather than having to read copious amounts of text.

Examinations

- Allow extra time in formal exams, school based exams and class tests
- Allow the student to complete oral exams
- Avoid multiple choice questions - particularly when there are only slight variations in the answer options
- Allow the student to use a PC
- If the student requires natural or non-fluorescent lighting, make sure there is an appropriate room available
- The student may need a private room
- The student may require a split exam
- Keep examination instructions clear and short. Use simple language. Avoid jargon unless it is crucial to the inherent requirements of the exam
- Allow time for rest breaks
- Allow the student to take in food, drink and medication if required
- The student may need to leave the room - allow this and if necessary have an invigilator accompany them

***Remember: Alternative Adjustments is about providing the opportunity for equality, not the attainment of a particular outcome. A student with a disability is still required to present work that is of a recognised standard. Providing flexibility in the process of learning does not mean that the subject standards are lowered.**