UCHealth
Integrative Medicine Center

Chronic Fatigue

What is chronic fatigue?

Chronic fatigue syndrome, also known as Systemic Exertion Intolerance Disease (SEID), is a complex disorder that can be difficult to diagnose and treat. The Integrative Medicine Center can aid in treatment and recommend approaches to relieve symptoms while augmenting conventional care regimens.

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Three considerations when treating chronic fatigue syndrome:

1. **There is no specific diagnostic test for chronic fatigue syndrome.** Generally, patients suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome experience profound fatigue for six months or longer. Many other symptoms, such as weakness, muscle pain, impaired memory, anxiety, panic attacks and insomnia may be present in patients with chronic fatigue syndrome. Specific tests must be performed before a patient is diagnosed. These tests will rule out treatable illnesses such as thyroid disease, sleep disorder, diabetes, vitamin deficiency, cancer or depression.

2. **Patients with chronic fatigue syndrome often suffer from conditions such as fibromyalgia, chemical sensitivities, anxiety disorder and major depression,** making it difficult to diagnose the condition and treat it with conventional medication. Although the conditions may coexist, chronic fatigue syndrome is not caused by depression. Many patients with chronic fatigue syndrome have no psychiatric disorder.

3. **Conventional medication often does not provide patients the relief they seek.** While patients might ask for medications, none have been shown to effectively treat chronic fatigue syndrome. Studies suggest the most effective treatment plan for the condition combines graded sleep, exercise and behavioral therapies. To be successful, this type of treatment requires patients to be actively involved in their therapy and committed to the program. Practitioners at the Integrative Medicine Center spend time with each patient to explain the diagnosis and recommended treatment plan. To provide important feedback and to monitor results, patients are encouraged to keep journals between visits.

Complementary therapies and self-care strategies used to treat chronic fatigue syndrome.

Sleep, nutrition and exercise.

A pattern of good sleep, nutrition and a daily aerobic exercise routine can help manage chronic fatigue. Behavioral techniques, medications or a referral to a sleep specialist may be recommended to facilitate good sleep. To promote exercise, the Integrative Medicine Center will create and discuss an individualized graded program with your patient. We will also make nutritional recommendations to optimize energy.

Cognitive behavioral therapy.

To change self-defeating behaviors and enhance self belief, patients should meet with one of the Integrative Medicine Center's experienced psychologists. The psychologist might integrate stress-reduction techniques such as mindfulness, guided imagery or meditation.

Complementary medicine therapies.

If patients demonstrate adherence to their individualized sleep, exercise, nutrition and behavioral therapy treatment plans, complementary therapies such as massage, acupuncture, nutritional counseling or chiropractic care should be considered.

How integrative medicine can benefit your patients with chronic fatigue syndrome:

- Typical treatment plan
- Health and wellness visit
- Recommendations for nutrution, sleep, exercise and health psychology
- Consideration of complementary therapies
- Follow-up appointments

Complementary therapies are medicine treatments, such as acupuncture or chiropractic care, that are used to complement traditional conventional care provided by physicians.

Schedule an appointment.

Your patients can schedule appointments at the Integrative Medicine Center by calling 720.553.2750. Appointments can be made Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., with limited evening availability.

Contact information.

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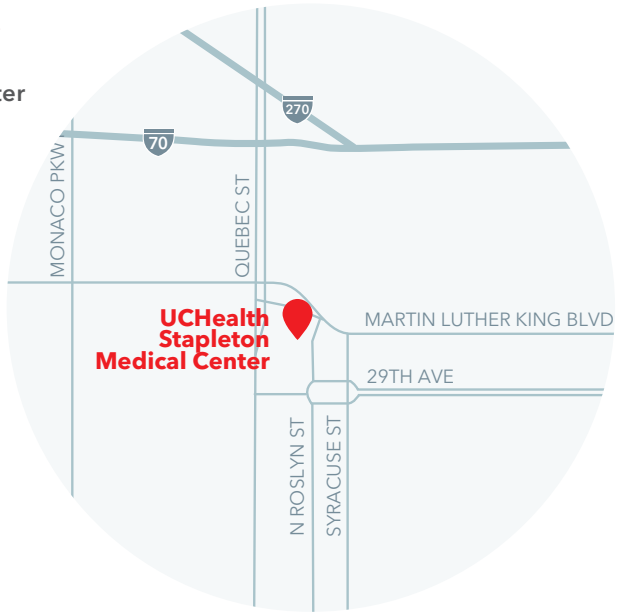

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Learn more at uchealth.org

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