



# Living with Chronic Fatigue and managing stress

## HEALTHY MINDS

Got something on your mind?

## How does chronic fatigue affect people?

Around a quarter of a million people in the United Kingdom suffer from chronic fatigue (CF), which is also sometimes known as ME (myalgic encephalomyelitis) or SEID (systemic exertion intolerance disease).

It causes people to feel tired or exhausted all the time, particularly after being active, and the symptoms do not usually improve, or only improve a little, with rest.

There are differing degrees of chronic fatigue. Some people will have to take regular breaks or time off from work, but will still be able to complete day-to-day activities. For others, the symptoms can be much more severe, reducing mobility and making day-to-day tasks difficult to complete. Severe CF can also affect sleep and concentration, and may cause physical pain, low mood and intolerance to noise or light.

There are a number of ideas about what causes CF, but the exact cause remains unknown. Suggestions include: hormonal imbalance, stress and emotional trauma or problems with an immune system response following an infection and depression.

## Chronic fatigue and your mood

Having CF can leave people feeling de-motivated, helpless and low in mood. This can affect the way people think about themselves, causing them to feel worthless, a burden, or just like giving up. People may withdraw from family and friends and do less and less of what they used to enjoy, which can result in a vicious cycle (see the diagram opposite).

It's important to get support to help you manage CF. Your GP or practice nurse can offer you information about the condition and talk through treatments and support options that may be right for you.

# Vicious cycle of chronic fatigue and stress



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is one approach that has been shown to benefit people with CF. It can help you to look at how your condition affects your mood, thoughts and behaviour, and how these, in turn, affect your chronic fatigue. It can help you to begin to make changes to improve your condition. Healthy Minds is a local service that offers CBT.

## How Healthy Minds can help

Healthy Minds can offer you a safe place to talk through any worries you have about your condition and help you to find ways to manage them. It can teach you ways to boost your mood if you're feeling low, because keeping on top of your emotional wellbeing can have a positive impact on your physical health.

Healthy Minds can:

- Offer a safe place to allow you to talk about your condition and how it affects you.
- Help you to better understand the interaction between low mood or anxiety and management of your condition.
- Allow you to learn ways of coping with worries and low mood.
- Allow you to set realistic goals and to pace your daily activities to make them more manageable.
- Allow you to find ways of coping and dealing with stress.

Our therapists can provide you with support in a number of ways. You will initially be contacted by phone to discuss the best way we can help you. You may choose to continue to speak to someone on the telephone if you find it difficult to leave the house. If required, a member of the team may work with you on a one-to-one basis, or you might want to be accompanied by a close friend or family member. Healthy Minds also offers group sessions, which provide an opportunity to share your thoughts and concerns with people who are experiencing similar issues and learn new ways of coping from each other.

## Contacting Healthy Minds

You can pass on your details to Healthy Minds by using the website below. You will be contacted by someone from the service by phone to take further information.

[www.penninecare.nhs.uk/healthyminds](http://www.penninecare.nhs.uk/healthyminds)

Alternatively, you can contact Healthy Minds for help and support by calling us on **0161 253 5258**. If you prefer, you can ask your GP or other healthcare professional to refer you to Healthy Minds.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Service

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) acts on behalf of service users, families and carers to negotiate prompt solutions and help bring about changes in the way that services are developed. As well as providing a confidential advice and support service, PALS will help guide you through the different services available from the NHS.

**Tel: 0161 716 3178**

## Comments and complaints

We want to learn from comments and complaints about our services. If you have any, please speak with a member of staff. Every effort will be made to resolve any concerns and complaining will not cause any difficulties in your care with us.

You can also contact the Trust's Complaints Department via post at Trust Headquarters, 225 Old Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7SR.

**Tel: 0161 716 3083**

**Email: [complaints.penninecare@nhs.net](mailto:complaints.penninecare@nhs.net)**

## Become a member of our Trust

You can be the voice of your community by electing or becoming a governor, find out more about your local mental health and community services, and receive updates, comment on our plans and get invitations to health events.

**Tel: 0161 716 3960**

**Email: [ftmembership.penninecare@nhs.net](mailto:ftmembership.penninecare@nhs.net)**

## Alternative formats

If you need help to understand this information, require it in another format such as large print, spoken (on CD) or Braille, or require it in a different language – speak to a member of staff.