

Could You Have ME/CFS?

(Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome)

ME/CFS is a complex illness and symptoms of ME/CFS may seem similar to many other illnesses. ME/CFS requires **three** symptoms:

1 Not being able to participate in routine activities that were possible before becoming ill, such as work, school, social life, and/or personal life, that:

- **Lasts** for more than **6 months**
- Is accompanied by **fatigue** that is:
 - Often serious
 - Just started (not lifelong)
 - Not the result of ongoing activities
 - Not from more than usual effort
 - Not made better by rest

2 Post-exertional malaise (PEM). Worsening of symptoms after physical, mental, or emotional effort that would not have caused a problem before the illness. This is sometimes referred to as “crashing” by people with ME/CFS.

3 Unrefreshing sleep. People with ME/CFS may not feel better even after a full night of sleep (e.g., feeling just as tired upon waking up as before going to bed).

In addition, **at least one** of the following symptoms is also required:



Impaired memory or ability to concentrate. People with ME/CFS may have trouble remembering, learning new things, concentrating, or making decisions.



Orthostatic intolerance (symptoms that occur when standing upright). People with ME/CFS may feel lightheaded or dizzy when standing upright and may even faint.

The list of key symptoms is drawn from an Institute of Medicine (IOM) report by an expert committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and published in 2015: *Beyond Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Redefining an Illness*. You may experience some additional symptoms.

Only a healthcare provider can diagnose ME/CFS. A healthcare provider will ask about how often your symptoms occur and how much they affect you. Sometimes you may need to make more than one visit to a healthcare provider before being diagnosed. While not all healthcare providers are familiar with diagnosing ME/CFS, resources are available to help them make a diagnosis.

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Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
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Zoonotic Infectious Diseases

For more information on ME/CFS,
please visit www.cdc.gov/me-cfs.