



Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by the insurance professionals at Veritas Risk Services

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), chronic fatigue syndrome affects more than 1 million people in the United States.

CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Do you find yourself too tired for everyday activities like going to work and doing the dishes? If so, you may be suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), which is characterized by profound fatigue lasting for at least six months that does not improve with rest.

Onset and Symptoms

The symptoms of CFS may either begin suddenly or appear gradually, generally feeling like the flu at first. CFS is usually marked by eight characteristic symptoms:

- Post-exertional malaise (return of symptoms after physical or mental exertion)
- Unrefreshing sleep
- Substantial impairment in memory or concentration
- Muscle pain
- Joint pain
- Headaches of a new type, pattern or severity than you've experienced before
- Sore throat
- Tender neck and armpit lymph nodes

Because a number of factors can cause fatigue, people frequently ignore the first warning signs of CFS. Typically, symptoms are most severe in the early stages of the disease. The condition may improve for a while and then worsen, or it may disappear entirely only to reappear later.

Risk Factors

People of every age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic group can have CFS, but research has shown the following trends:

- Women are four times more likely than men to have CFS.
- CFS is most common among people in their 40s and 50s.
- Although it is much less common in children than in adults, those who develop CFS usually do so during adolescence.

Cause

The cause of CFS is unknown. Sometimes it occurs after an infection such as a cold or viral illness. CFS is not caused by depression, although the two often coexist.

Diagnosis

CFS is difficult to diagnose because fatigue can be caused by many things. A doctor will base a CFS diagnosis on your medical history and a physical exam. Lab tests are often performed to rule out other medical conditions that may be causing the symptoms of CFS, but there are no specific tests for it.

Prognosis

The degree of CFS can vary widely. Some sufferers can continue to do most daily activities at home or work, but may be overly tired after doing them, while others cannot perform many of their daily activities at all. Those with the most severe CFS cannot get out of bed and need assistance with basic activities like dressing, eating and bathing.

Coping Methods

If you suffer from CFS, it is important to eat a balanced diet, get adequate rest, exercise and, most importantly, pace yourself. It may benefit you to go to a support group to learn from other CFS sufferers. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/cfs/.

