Fatigue, ME/CFS and long COVID in one page

What it is

What is ME/CFS?

ME/CFS, short for myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome, is a long-term illness that causes extreme tiredness. Its mark is a crash after effort: symptoms get worse after physical or mental activity. A GP diagnoses it once tests rule out other causes.

- ME/CFS is a long-term illness of extreme tiredness
- Symptoms get worse after physical or mental effort
- Long COVID can look the same

The signs

What are the symptoms of ME/CFS?

The core symptom is a crash after effort: tiredness and other symptoms get worse after physical or mental activity. Others include trouble thinking, broken sleep, headaches, muscle or joint pain, a sore throat, dizziness and a racing heart.

- The core sign is a crash after physical or mental effort
- Trouble thinking and broken sleep are common
- Many people also get headaches and dizziness

How a diagnosis happens

How do I get ME/CFS or long COVID diagnosed?

Through your GP, over at least 3 months. The GP rules out other causes with tests, then reviews you. A British guideline confirms ME/CFS only after 3 months of symptoms.

- Go back sooner if symptoms are new or worse.

Treatment

What is a GP chronic condition management plan?

The Medicare plan your usual GP writes for a condition present, or likely, for at least 6 months. It opens allied health visits. No list of conditions exists: whether you would benefit is the GP's clinical judgement.

Medication

Can medicine help?

Sometimes, for the anxiety. healthdirect says medicines such as antidepressants can help reduce anxiety. For long COVID, healthdirect says no medicine is currently advised as a treatment. Your GP decides about medicines, so they need a full list of what you already take. Any referral for therapy must list your current medicines too.

- Antidepressants can help reduce anxiety
- No medicine is advised for long COVID yet
- Your GP decides about medicines

What it costs

What tests will the GP do, and who pays?

Tests that rule out other causes. Medicare pays a benefit when your GP requests them, and if the laboratory bulk bills, you pay nothing. Ask before the blood is taken.

- The laboratory decides whether to bulk bill.
- Results go to your GP. Book a visit to hear them.

In danger? Call 000. Lifeline 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14, or chat online.

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467. Free counselling by phone or video, any hour.

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