

Hidden disabilities

M.E. or Chronic Fatigue

Reasonable Adjustments



It is estimated that there are up to 240,000 people with CFS/ME in the UK.

M.E. is also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS), although strictly speaking there are some slight differences between the two.

Occasionally it may be diagnosed as Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome.

It has been found that people with CFS/ME have abnormalities in the nervous and immune systems, although these abnormalities are not properly understood.

CFS/ME is difficult to diagnose. Much of the diagnosis is based on the identification of core symptoms persisting over 6 months and taking tests to rule out other conditions.

Symptoms are very variable and can be mild or severe.

The most common symptoms are:

- **overwhelming and persistent fatigue following mental or physical activity (often a delayed reaction);**
- **muscle pain;**
- **inability to concentrate;**
- **problems organising thoughts;**
- **memory loss; and,**
- **sleep difficulties.**



Other symptoms may include:

- **dizziness.**
- **migraines.**
- **increased sensitivity to light and noise.**
- **digestive problems.**
- **irritable bowel syndrome.**
- **poor temperature control.**
- **feeling generally unwell.**
- **depression.**
- **fibromyalgia**

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People with CFS/ME tend to have good days and bad days.



Overdoing it on good days can worsen the symptoms.

The symptoms of CFS/ME can be exacerbated by infections, mental or physical stress and temperature extremes.



The following are examples that may amount to substantial adverse effect:

- difficulty in get dressed;
- difficulty carrying out activities caused by frequent minor incontinence;
- difficulty preparing a meal;
- difficulty waiting or queuing, e.g. because of fatigue;
- inability to walk long distances without difficulty, e.g. because of fatigue;
- difficulty picking up objects of moderate weight with one hand;
- significant difficulty taking part in normal social interaction; and,
- dDifficulty concentrating.



Although an impairment may not have a substantial effect on any one activity, taken together its effects could result in a substantial adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

The illness varies greatly in its duration but is highly unlikely to last less than one year. Some people may recover after 10 years. Others may never completely recover. ME/CFS can also occur in cycles with apparent recovery and then a relapse.

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Work Place Reasonable Adjustments: what you and your colleagues can do at your workplace



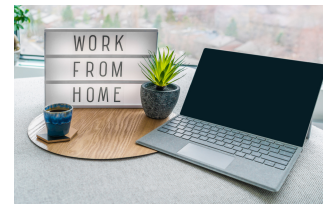
International research suggests that between 25 - 50% of people with CFS/ME are unable to maintain previously held employment, while substantial proportions of those who do maintain employment report decreased work performance.

As the severity of symptoms varies, it is important to identify adjustments which will enable a certain proportion to continue in work. These could include:

1. Reducing or changing working hours or allowing flexitime.



2. Working from home.



3. Increasing rest breaks and encouraging self-paced workloads.



4. Arranging workplaces so that less walking or physical exertion is necessary.



5. Reducing stress.



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6. Providing memory aids, e.g. organisers and written job instructions.



7. Minimising distractions.



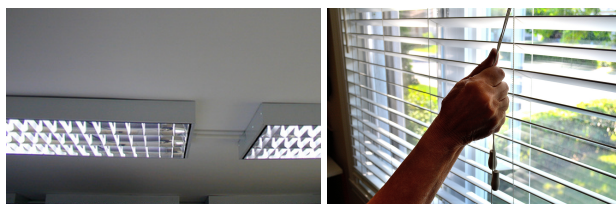
8. Controlling workplace temperatures.



9. Modifying dress codes.



10. Eradicating fluorescent lights and providing window blinds.



See also adjustments relevant to Migraine and Depression. For some forms of muscle weakness, see RSI.