

# **ME & CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME**

## **Here is Dr Ray Strands Advice on Chronic Fatigue...**

### **Fibromyalgia Chronic Fatigue**

Fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue is a disease of exclusion. In other words, these patients have an array of symptoms and complaints, which mimic many illnesses. Physicians usually do very extensive workups only to find that everything appears pretty much normal.

This disease used to be called "psychosomatic rheumatism." I fear that many physicians still believe this disease is simply in the patient's head. More and more doctors, however, are beginning to realize the seriousness of this disease and its tremendous affect on patients' lives. Statistics estimate there are over 8 million people in the United States alone suffering with this disease. Eight out of nine are women.

Fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue are considered by many to be different expressions of the same disease. All of these patients suffer from overwhelming and usually disabling fatigue. Fibromyalgia patients experience total body pain, unrestful sleep, and a myriad of other symptoms. Patients with chronic fatigue, on the other hand, have more swollen glands, recurrent fevers, and frequent infections.

Fibromyalgia is diagnosed by excluding other possible diseases and then by doing tender point testing. By eliciting tenderness in at least 11 of 18 predetermined spots, a physician is able to diagnose the disease. Essentially all laboratory tests, X-rays, biopsies, and MRI's will come out negative.

Chronic fatigue patients are diagnosed by eliminating all other possible causes of fatigue. Anyone who has suffered for more than six months with disabling fatigue essentially has chronic fatigue. The sad truth is that it usually takes approximately 6 to 8 years for these patients to finally be diagnosed by their physician with one of these diseases.

Traditional medicine has no specific treatment for these diseases. With fibromyalgia, physicians typically place patients on a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory for pain, amitriptyline for sleep, perhaps a muscle relaxant and anti-depressant and then they tell the patient to find a support group and learn to live with it. What is even more concerning is the frequency with which these patients are being treated with narcotic pain medication. Now, they not only have a horrible disease but are also hooked on narcotic pain medication.

My wife has suffered with fibromyalgia for the past 18 years. During the first 12 years of our marriage she needed to be in bed before 8 P.M. She never had a restful night's sleep and would get up just as tired as when she went to bed. Living with this illness for the past 17 years has totally changed my perception on the seriousness of this disease. Early morning stiffness, mental fog, muscle spasms (my massage technique has certainly improved), fatigue, and pain were daily encounters with which she had to learn to live.

My wife has always joked that she thought marrying a physician would allow her to improve her health. But I'm afraid I was not the answer. The frustration felt by a physician when he or she is unable to do anything for a patient cannot be overstated. And I now realize, first-handedly, the frustration patients with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue have with their doctors.

When my wife was struggling with the most difficult fatigue, she asked if she could try some nutritional supplements given to her by a friend. For 23 years, I would do most anything to get my patients off any kind of supplements. However, my response to her shocked even me. I told her she could certainly try since I had not been able to find anything to help her through traditional medicine.

Within a week she saw marked improvement and within three weeks she was back to her normal self and off all medications. Over the next year she not only totally recovered, but felt more energetic than she had in years. She has added three to four hours to each of her days. She has significantly less pain and fewer muscle spasms, and her energy level has now surpassed mine.

Obviously this caught my attention. Her recovery challenged me to try to understand what had happened. This was the beginning of my newly found interest in nutritional supplements.

Shortly after this experience, I read a book by Kenneth Cooper, M.D., called "The Antioxidant Revolution." I have always admired Dr. Cooper, who started the exercise revolution back in the early 1970s. I became so intrigued with his book I researched his research. One part of the book especially caught my attention: at his aerobics clinic in Dallas, Dr. Cooper evaluated several athletes suffering from over-training syndrome. His theory was that oxidative stress was the cause.

When people exercise moderately the body is able to handle the amount of free radicals produced. However, in cases of excessive exercise as in the training of professional athletes, the amount of free radicals goes up exponentially. It struck me that these athletes with over-training syndrome had the same symptoms as patients with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. I was baffled and wondered, Could it be possible that the root cause of fibromyalgia /chronic fatigue is oxidative stress?

As we learn more and more about how oxidative stress can cause degenerative

diseases, one has to wonder if this is the cause of the fibromyalgia/chronic fatigue syndromes. These syndromes are not high on the totem pole for research dollars. I have been unable to find any significant studies that have considered this as a possibility. I am hopeful more funds will be allocated toward these disabling diseases in the future.

For the past six years, I have been evaluating and treating a group of patients with the belief that the underlying cause is oxidative stress. Since these diseases are able to mimic many other diseases, I must first rule all other possibilities out. I then place these patients on a complete and balanced nutritional supplement program.

I have observed a fairly consistent pattern of improvement in my patients. The most common response I get at the two-month follow-up exam is their thinking and focus is significantly improved. They feel they have come out of a mental fog. At the four-month exam, they are usually sleeping better and noticing some improvement in their energy level. The last things to improve are the pain, fever, and frequent infections. The decrease of infections and fevers is evidence that one's immune system is definitely improving. Many of my patients comment, "I actually have my life back!"

I have now been involved with over 500 patients with fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue and have been able to achieve good to excellent results in over 70 to 75% of these patients. By bringing oxidative stress back under control, their disease has been captured.

The majority will have significant improvement while using high-quality, complete and balanced nutritional supplements along with necessary optimizers. I have found that the optimizers must be varied or increased depending on the initial response of the patient or the severity of one's disease. It often takes six months for these patients to be convinced of their improvement and they may still not be fully recovered at that point-but they know they are on the right track.

Once I see a significant clinical response, I keep my patients at that level of optimizer (in this case, Grape Seed Extract) for another two to three months. I then slowly start to back off the level of grape seed extract until the patient reaches what I call a maintenance level. If she becomes worse for any reason while pulling back the amount, I move her to a higher level again until she begins improving. Economically, it's best to use the least amount of grape seed extract necessary in maintaining the patient's improvement. Patients usually continue to improve even at lower levels once oxidative stress has been brought back under control.

Patients with fibromyalgia /chronic fatigue have flare-ups and remissions. Therefore, I advise my patients who have had a great response and are now on a maintenance nutritional program that they will have flare-ups and some difficult days. When this happens, I simply have them increase the amount of antioxidants and grape seed extract they are taking. They may need to stay at this increased level of antioxidants for

10 to 14 days or until they are feeling better, and then they slowly drop back to the maintenance level again.

Everyone needs to review the web page on "Oxidative Stress" to learn what factors increase the amount of free radicals produced by the body. Patients do best who've learned to anticipate situations that cause more oxidative stress. This may include a highly stressful situation, a vigorous work out, or even exposure to an increased amount of toxins which otherwise cannot be avoided. By increasing the amount of antioxidants before a potential setback, it allows the patient a jumpstart and the possibility of even avoid the setback altogether.

## **EXERCISE**

I recommend exercise for my patients with fibromyalgia. However, this should be a very modest exercise routine and should never be done two days in a row. If they exercise too much or exercise two days in a row, they can crash and have a setback for two weeks. It is important to exercise with extreme care and to always do a little less than you think you can.

I also advise my patients to use some weight resistance exercise along with a modest aerobic workout. By using care, they can slowly increase the intensity of their workouts and after several months may even be able to work out two days in a row.

## **DIET**

I instruct all my fibromyalgia /chronic fatigue patients in exactly how they should eat. Many fibromyalgia patients also have hypoglycemia and do not tolerate a high carbohydrate diet. I feel that these patients especially need to eat a well balanced diet of low-glycemic carbohydrates, good protein, and good fat. This is explained in detail under the healthy diet section of Health Concepts.

## **Nutritional Supplement Recommendations**

I recommend that all my patients take the basic nutritional support I refer to as cellular nutrition. This regime provides all the necessary micronutrients to the cell at optimal levels (not RDA levels) for undeniable health benefits as documented in the medical literature. When the cell is provided maximum support, it can then determine what it does and does not need. This allows each cell to not only overcome nutritional deficiencies but also to fully tap the levels of all the nutrition it needs.

The synergistic affect of providing all of the nutrients needed by one's body at the most advantageous levels results in optimizing and rebuilding the body's natural immune

system, antioxidant, and repair systems back to their fullest fighting potential against disease.

To accomplish this goal, I first recommend an Antioxidant tablet, Mineral tablet, Essential Fats, Calcium/Magnesium, and a Fiber supplement. (For specific details on the daily recommendations of each, click on each supplement individually or click on "Definitions of Individual Nutrients" for a complete overview.)

### **Optimizers for Fibromyalgia/Chronic Fatigue**

Grape Seed Extract-200mg to 600 mg (Proflavanol)per day-I have found that some of my patients will respond to the lower doses of grape seed extract but in some cases I have had to increase the amount to the higher levels to bring oxidative stress back under control and "capture their disease". Therefore, if they are not improving in 4 to 6 weeks, I begin increasing the amount of grape seed they are taking.

CoQ10-100 to 200 mg daily (Coquinone)

Additional Magnesium-100 to 200 mg daily (Active Calcium)

### **Choosing High-Quality Nutritional Supplements**

I strongly recommend that you do not simply sell your health to the lowest bidder. Once you become convinced of the health benefits that nutritional supplements can offer, you will want to be sure you are getting what you pay for. Below I have provided a few basic guidelines to assure that you are taking high-quality supplements.

You will not get the optimal results I speak of on this web site while take low-quality supplements. As you will learn, nutritional supplementation is a poorly regulated industry. As in any industry, the raw products used as well as the supplement's manufacturing techniques will definitely affect the supplement's quality. Therefore, it will take some effort on your part to check out the quality of a particular product you choose to buy. It is critical that you purchase high-quality supplements that are complete and balanced to protect or regain your health.

I now advise my patients to purchase the best quality of supplement affordable. Every individual must assess the value and importance of his or her health. I realize this can be a significant economic decision for most people. I personally consider nutritional supplements as my health insurance. Once our health is lost, it is very difficult to regain, no matter how much money we are willing and able to spend. I'd rather invest in keeping my body healthy from the start, wouldn't you agree?

When you look at my nutritional recommendations for the Antioxidant tablet and Mineral tablet, you will quickly realize that you cannot get this amount of

supplementation in a simple daily multivitamin. Several companies are now putting all of the needed nutrients together in one or two different pills. In order to achieve the optimal levels I speak of, however, you will most likely need to take several (four to eight tablets) daily. The more antioxidants you take and the more variation your supplement provides, the better. Also be sure that you are getting all the recommended levels of the minerals and the B-cofactors.

You need to spend a little time investigating the nutritional company you choose. You can locate information on the company's website or you may need to call the company directly. Most importantly, you want a company that follows Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) for pharmaceuticals. They purchase pharmaceutical-grade raw materials and then follow pharmaceutical-Good Manufacturing Practices in producing these supplements. These companies produce what is called pharmaceutical-grade supplements, meaning similar guidelines are followed for manufacturing its products as companies making over-the-counter drugs. The government does not require the manufacturers of nutritional supplements to do this, still, some companies opt to provide their customers with the assurance of getting what they pay for by producing a high quality, pharmaceutical-grade product. These high-quality manufacturers will put the actual amounts of the nutrients found in their products on the label and give full disclosure of all the ingredients. You may also find an expiration date on the bottle and the company's full address. An encouraging sign is an actual street address rather than a P.O. Box.

Another aspect to consider when you are researching a particular company is where it markets its products. A company that markets internationally usually has to follow higher standards than those who market only in the United States. Canada, Australia, and Western European countries have the highest standards for the manufacturing of nutritional supplements. Some of these countries will also periodically send officials to perform on-site inspections of these nutritional companies manufacturing plants. When the company is able to show you third-party certification documenting the quality of its manufacturing practices, it serves as an added bonus.

Does all of this sound too picky? The November 1997 Tufts University Newsletter reported a study at the University of Maryland that looked carefully at nine different prescription prenatal vitamins. They did not even study the contents of the vitamins, but rather looked to see if they even dissolved. (If the pill doesn't dissolve, it doesn't really matter what is in it.) Researchers soon discovered that only three of the nine prenatal vitamins even dissolved. This leads to another important aspect when choosing a high quality nutritional supplement-be sure it will dissolve.

The pills that dissolved were produced under what are called U.S. Pharmacopoeia (USP) standards-government guidelines that assure consumers medications and supplement tablets will dissolve and be readily absorbed into the body. Pharmaceutical GMP's should be rendered worthless if the company does not also follow USP standards for the

dissolution of its tablets. Choosing a company that follows the USP guidelines is certainly a step in the right direction.

Sometimes it is quite difficult to find information about the level of quality control used in the manufacturing process. Just the sheer number of nutritional supplements available on the market today may prove overwhelming. Every company is trying to find its niche in this very competitive market. My best advice to you is this: look through the marketing hype and try to get to the heart of the completeness and quality of the nutritional products.

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