



Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) doesn't mean you're just really tired! Daily fatigue annoys all of us but remember CFS is a seriously debilitating illness. The key symptoms of CFS are: **fatigue**; **generalised pain**; **memory loss** and **concentration problems** and **anxiety or depression**.

The term CFS came from Western medicine as the condition presents a cluster of symptoms without an apparent cause. CFS is not caused by a virus, bacteria, hormonal changes or other physiological abnormalities. In short as there is no specific physical disease to fight, therefore Western medicine finds CFS a little confusing and difficult to treat.

The condition in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) terms is much more easily understood and treated. TCM identifies CFS as an imbalance in the body which has developed over a long period of time and usually pertains to a body pattern of Qi deficiency.

I have classified the key causative factors of CFS into three headings:

Post viral illness

Fighting a viral illness is carried out by the immune system. Dealing with an infection can be an exhausting process for the body. Once the virus or bacteria has been dealt with, either by natural defences or medication, it can leave the constitutional health in quite a depleted state.

Often due to this, original symptoms of the illness such as coughing, sinusitis or pain can continue even though the body has supposedly dealt with the infection.

Emotional Trauma

According to TCM the mind, spirit and body are all interconnected. Stress affects the heart kidneys and the liver which in turn will disrupt systems such as; the metabolic, the digestive and the hormonal. If the emotional disturbance is significant or ongoing it will quickly disrupt the body and inevitably create high levels of fatigue.

Excessive Physical Exercise

Excessive exercise from sport or a labour intensive job can seriously deplete the body's energy. This will no doubt result in fatigue and possible repetitive injuries. Obviously exercise is necessary for optimal health but it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

Treatment

CFS usually develops over a long period of time and therefore, a cure won't come in a single pill. The body's Qi needs to recover. TCM offers an effective treatment to improve the quality of life and can significantly reduce recovery time.

Key points for recovery and preventing CFS;

- Not over taxing the body during stress, illness or physical work.
- Nutrition is crucial, regular meals containing the correct balance of protein, carbohydrates and fats are essential for stimulating the metabolism.
- Not eating excessive raw or cold foods from the fridge as this can cause bloating and impede the absorption of nutrients and minerals.
- Chinese herbal medicine and acupuncture will help strengthen the body more quickly. Chinese herbs such as astragalus, angelica and ginseng are commonly used to treat fatigue. These herbs are made into a formula which specifically suits an individual's body pattern, as each person