

Environmental News

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Hope and Wellness

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The greatest inspiration to wellness is hope. Hope is an emotional state that combined with positive thoughts and certain goals can give us strength to move past the adversity of chronic illness such as Fibromyalgia (FM), Chronic Fatigue syndrome (CFS) and Environmental Sensitivities (ES). **If we believe that tomorrow will be better, we can bear the challenges of today and avoid despair.**

Wellness is all about how people can enhance the quality of their lives and avoid more serious illness by making simple and sometimes surprisingly difficult changes in their lifestyles. Wellness is disease prevention, stress reduction and even personal, social and spiritual growth. The path to wellness starts with **"I think I can adapt"** to positive life style changes. Sunshine, clean water and air,

rest, positive social interactions, exercise and a healthy diet can ease your mind and improve your health.

Health tips:

Embrace hope and wellness by taking time to care for yourself (without guilt) so you are better able to take care of those you love. You will incorporate new lifestyle changes that will last a lifetime.

Where to start?

- 1. Attitude and self-talk:** Make a commitment to self improvement and growth. This journey to wellness can be supported by a friend, your family doctor, and support group or health coach.
- 2. Finding your passion:** Determine your personal goals for wellness. For example, do you want to improve your eating habits or/and fitness level? Where do I want to start? How am I going to achieve these goals and be happy?
- 3. Taking time for play:** What are my interests/hobbies? What can I realistically do? For example, why not have a few friends over for a game night? What is the one fun activity I have always wanted to do in the sunshine and clean air?
- 4. Reduce your fatigue:** You can feel better with deep sleep, 8 to 10 hours nightly which allows time for your body to heal. Take a 30 minute rest period daily to re-energize.

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5. Incorporating movement without setbacks:

Integrate exercise gradually starting with stretches. Then, add walking, tai chi, aquafit, yoga and Pilates as tolerated. As you increase your activity, you will begin to sweat and your body will detoxify.

6. Improving your diet: What is the best diet for me to improve my health? Do I need to take more vitamins and minerals? Discuss diet and vitamins and mineral supplementation with a registered dietitian, naturopath or /and your physician. Are you ingesting foods that contain preservatives, pesticides, dyes, hormones or sweeteners? Are you drinking 6 to 8 glasses of filtered water per day?

7. Reducing your environmental exposures: Declutter your home. Use fragrance-free cleaning and personal products. Change air filters on air cleaners. Open the windows for 10 minutes on milder days.

8. Handling stress with more ease: What stress management strategies such as deep breathing, meditation, distraction therapy and or new coping strategies will help you? Rest and pace yourself.

9. Supporting your relationships: How can you be there for your family and friends? How can you be accountable and responsible?

Conclusion

Hope promotes wellness. People who deal with life challenges of invisible disabilities and illnesses such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue and multiple chemical sensitivities may be inspired to join together in supporting one another with hope.

References:

Solutions for Many Aspects of Fibromyalgia. Available at <http://www.fibromyalgiahope.com>

Bromley, Deb (2007). New Hope for Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Sufferers. Available at <http://www.holisticonline.com>

Hope in Wellness. Available at <http://www.angelfire.com>

Eating Healthier

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People with Chronic Fatigue, Fibromyalgia and Environmental Sensitivities need to think about eating healthier during the holiday season and all year round. As the holidays draw closer, the first thing that many people start to think about is food. We decide to splurge on that one meal and then the inevitable crash happens. We may feel like we just have no energy left to do anything. By making healthier food choices, people with environmental health conditions can conserve energy, control weight and increase their motivation to exercise afterwards.

What should I be eating?

First, you should try to remain as close to your current diet as possible. The holiday season is not a reason to deviate from the norm. So if you have food intolerances or allergies, be aware of what you are eating; if you are following a gluten free or dairy free diet, staying on them is important for your health.

Many recipes are available that use ingredients from your diet to make delicious, holiday meals. It could be as simple as substituting egg whites for egg yolks or overhauling your entire dish with healthier choices with fewer calories.

Here are a few websites with great recipes:

www.eatingwell.com/recipes_menus/collections/holiday_collection_1

www.lesliebeck.com/article_listing.php?id=27

www.fitnessandfreebies.com/holidays/christmas/

What about eating out?

Go out and enjoy yourself! However, it is important to let your host know about any food allergies, intolerances or special diets that you are following. If you're eating out at a restaurant, be sure to call ahead to ask about food additives and what kinds of accommodations they can make for you.

How should I be eating?

Here are some tips on foods and cooking to help you prevent fatigue and increase your energy during this holiday season.

- * Eat **BEFORE** you get to a party. If you arrive hungry, you are more likely to eat all the wrong things. Have a small snack before you head out the door.
- * Balance your party plate by choosing lean proteins, fibre-rich foods, fruits and vegetables next to small portions of your favourite dessert.
- * Sit down and eat slowly so you do not eat too quickly. Divide the meal into smaller portions for better digestion.
- * Drink lots of water to maintain your hydration and do not drink sugary drinks.
- * Enjoy activities and games at social gatherings; take time to talk to everyone and share stories.
- * **EXERCISE:** it is important to stay on any exercise regimens that you're already on. Just because it's the holidays doesn't mean you should stop.

Always keep your health in mind when eating. Try some of these tips and see if they make a difference. Most importantly, **ENJOY** eating with your family and friends because the holidays are also a time for bonding and fun.

The Importance of Exercise

John Molot, Staff Physician, Environmental Health Clinic



According to the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), just over half (52%) of people aged 12 or older are at least moderately active, as defined by walking 30 to 60 minutes a day, or taking an hour-long exercise class three times a week. Almost half our healthy population is not active enough.

With respect to fibromyalgia (FM), the medical literature is robust regarding the benefits of exercise, yet there is poor patient compliance with exercise recommendations. Given the pain, fatigue, and disrupted sleep of FM, it is not surprising because patients face additional challenges in adopting and maintaining an exercise program. In fact, 83% of patients who have FM do not engage in aerobic exercise, and most of those tested have below-average fitness levels. The average 40-year-old patient who has FM is as physically unfit as an 80-year-old person who does not have FM. Furthermore, FM patients are also more likely to be overweight or obese, which is also associated with pain and sleep disturbance.

Not only does exercise help to lose weight, it inhibits pain by the production of endorphins. However, a common complaint of many FM patients is that they hurt and feel more fatigued after exercise. This phenomenon occurs because the receptors for endorphins in FM patients are less sensitive and they have reduced muscle blood flow. Also, while

sustained muscular contraction inhibits pain in normal people, it increases it in FM. Furthermore, there is an abnormal autonomic and stress response, and these abnormalities also contribute to poor exercise tolerance and exercise-induced fatigue.

More than 70 studies of exercises including aerobics, (land and water), strength, flexibility, and “movement therapies”, (such as qi gong, tai chi, and yoga), have been tested in FM patients with positive results, but the attrition rates, i.e. the number of people who quit, are high. However, recent studies are finding that individualized, low-intensity exercises are effective in reducing both pain and cognitive dysfunction. Your muscle strength and energy increases and more people continue to exercise. The best results occur if the exercise is aerobic. This will drive oxygen into the cells, which will promote healing and improve muscle and neurological function at a cellular level.

The best way to start is with walking, and the best time to do so is after a sleep, i.e. first thing in the morning and/or after a nap. Note that most FM patients walk like people walking in the rain – crouched over. One should walk briskly with proper posture and shoulders back and down, with a long waist to keep your back straight, and looking straight ahead as if balancing a book on your head. This should be done every day, as long as no crash follows after the walk.

Try to do this every day and watch for improvement within weeks. You're Canadian; don't use the weather as an excuse.



WHAT'S ON!

Environmental Health Conference

The Environmental Health Conference for November 2010 was cancelled due to physician illness. Stay tuned for a new date for the conference in the spring!

Happy Holidays

May the spirit of Christmas bring you peace, the gladness of Christmas give you hope, the warmth of Christmas grant you love.

- Author Unknown

The Environmental Health Clinic

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Please feel free to call or write us for a copy of our Clinic brochure.



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