

Should you require any further information or wish to further explore the information provided in this pamphlet, please contact Emerge Australia.

www.emerge.org.au

NUTRITION AND ME/CFS

FACT SHEET 5
ENGLISH



Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) is a severe, complex, acquired illness with numerous symptoms related mainly to the dysfunction of the brain, gastro-intestinal, immune, endocrine and cardiac systems.

ME has been classified as a neurological disorder in the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases (ICD 10 G93.3) since 1969.

Supported by, ME/CFS
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A balanced diet

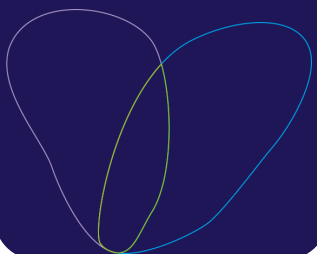
It is important that everyone eats a nutritionally balanced diet. People with ME/CFS are no different and should follow the Guide to Healthy Living Pyramid Table 1. It is important to eat as wide a variety of foods as possible, taking into account the numerous food intolerances that are common to those with ME/CFS.

Table 1: Guide to healthy living

Eat most: Plant-based foods		
Vegetables	Dried peas	Beans
Lentils	Cereals	Bread
Fruits	Nuts	Seeds
Grains (unrefined cereals, wholegrain bread, brown rice)		
Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day		
Eat in moderation: Protein-based foods		
Lean meat	Eggs	Fish
Chicken (skinless)	Milk, yoghurt	Cheese
Eat one serve of protein and three dairy foods each day		
Eat in small amounts: Fat and sugar-based foods		
Oil	Margarine	Reduced fat spreads
Butter	Sugar	



“Eating foods with a low glycaemic index can help with the management of ME/CFS.”



Low glycaemic index (GI)

Links between the modern western diet and chronic disease are becoming evident.

Foods with low GI break down more slowly allowing glucose to be released more evenly into the blood stream. This allows for a more level and sustained energy supply. Foods with a moderate to high GI should be eaten less regularly.

Examples of the GI rating of various carbohydrates are:

Low GI (less than 55): fruits, milk, pasta, grainy bread, porridge and lentils.

Medium GI (55 to 70): sugar, orange juice, basmati rice and wholemeal bread.

High GI (greater than 70): potatoes, white bread and long-grain rice.

ME/CFS and processed foods

Processed foods should be limited to occasional consumption. Not only because most will have a higher GI and many have chemical or heavy metal residues from the manufacturing process.

Most people with ME/CFS identify stomach and bowel symptoms. The exact links between food intake, gut symptoms, gut dysbiosis, leaky gut and ME/CFS are under investigation.

Food intolerance and food malabsorption

Commonly reported sensitivities are wheat, dairy, corn, tomato, gluten and decaffeinated beverages. A recent study in Melbourne found more than 60% had a lactose intolerance, more than 60% had a fructose intolerance and nearly 100% had an IGG food intolerance. In each of these clinical samples when the offending foods were removed a range of symptom relief was experienced.

ME/CFS, being a chronic disease, entitles you to an Enhanced Primary Care Plan which allows you five visits to a dietician under Medicare.

Chemical sensitivities

Most people with ME/CFS will have a number of chemical sensitivities and over time these can worsen. Additives, chemicals in processed foods and pesticides can add to these sensitivities.

Eating organic food can help reduce the intake of chemicals, pesticides and heavy metals.

Sensitivities to chemicals such as chlorine and fluoride found in tap water may also be present. A good quality water filter can help remove these chemicals.

When taking antibiotics it is advisable to protect your gut health with a probiotic. Probiotics vary in dosage and bacterial strain.

Supplements and micronutrients should be discussed with your ME/CFS specialist.

Reduce your chemical load

To further reduce your chemical load, try to remove all the chemicals and pesticides from your home and garage.

Use chemical free cleaning products.

Remove all sprays, polishes, aerosols. Use chemical free personal products such as deodorants, toothpastes, shampoos and conditioners.

Odour from new paints, new carpets, new furniture, new mattresses or recently dry-cleaned clothes may increase symptoms.

Kitchen ware. Some specially prepared surfaces may release chemicals or metals at high temperatures.

Plastic food and beverage containers can also release chemicals.



Purchasing food

If you are unable to shop seek out food stores that provide online or phone orders and home delivery services. Alternatively you may be eligible for meals on wheels and a shopper through your local council or community service. Discuss these options with your GP.

Eating out

Contact your ME/CFS state office for a list of shops and cafes that cater for food intolerances.

Meal Preparation

It is recommended to avoid cooking with trans-saturated fats, burnt oil or cooking in oil at high temperatures during meal preparation. When you are able to, cook enough for two or three meals and freeze.

Adding salt to food is not generally recommended. However, people with orthostatic intolerance or channelopathy may be advised to take extra fluids with added salt and electrolytes.

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- *FODMAPS (Fermentable Oligo, Di and Mono-sacccahrides and Polyols)

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