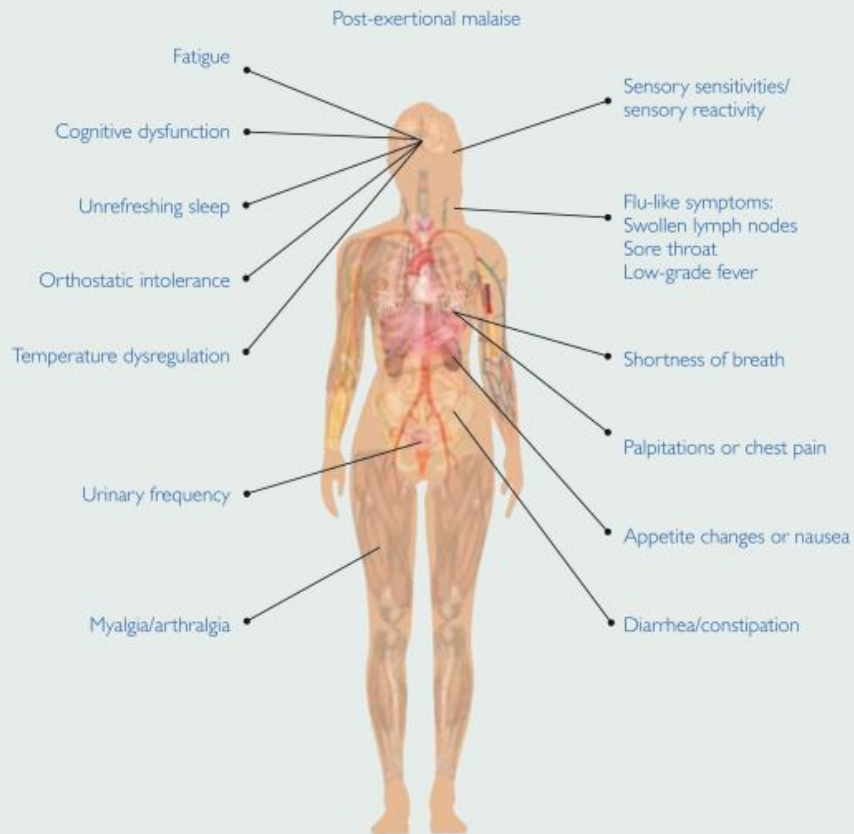


# ME/CFS

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis /  
Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

### Symptom presentation in ME/CFS

The national academy of medicine criteria require (1) post-exertional malaise; (2) at least six months of fatigue that is not relieved by rest, not a result of difficult activity, and was tolerated before onset, leading to significant functional impairment; (3) unrefreshing sleep; and (4) cognitive and/or orthostatic intolerance. Symptoms must be present for a least half of the time and lead to significant functional impairment. However, ME/CFS presents with multiple symptoms in all systems, including but not limited to those below.



## Diagnostic Criteria for ME/CFS

Diagnosis requires that the patient have the following three symptoms:

1. A substantial reduction or impairment in the ability to engage in pre-illness levels of occupational, educational, social, or personal activities, that persists for more than 6 months and is accompanied by fatigue, which is often profound, is of new or definite onset (not lifelong), is not the result of ongoing excessive exertion, and is not substantially alleviated by rest
2. Post-exertional malaise
3. Unrefreshing sleep

At least one of the two following manifestations is also required:

1. Cognitive impairment
2. Orthostatic intolerance

## Post-exertional malaise (PEM)

PEM is an increase in the severity of symptoms and/or the appearance of new symptoms after physical or cognitive exertion, often manifesting after a characteristic 24-hour delay. However, 12-48 hours is common. Some symptoms that may be part of PEM presentation are outlined below, with common-language descriptions.

### Sensory

New or increased sensitivity to light, sounds, smell or temperature

### Autonomic

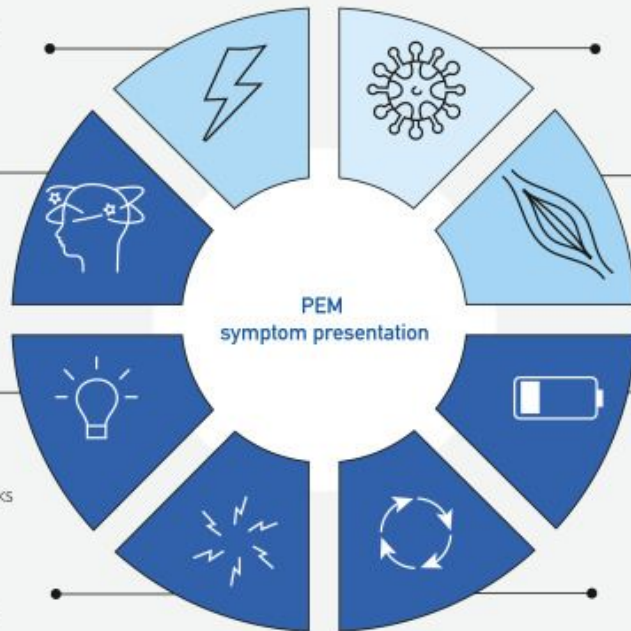
Nausea  
Vertigo, dizziness  
Increased sighing & yawning  
Drop in core temperature  
"The shakes"  
Heart pounding

### Cognitive

Can't process words  
Trouble retrieving words  
Thinking is effortful  
"brain fog",  
Trouble starting & changing tasks

### Pain

Headache, aches and pains,  
Pain where the skull meets the spine



### Immune

Flu-like symptoms  
Fever, sore throat  
swollen lymph nodes

### Neuromuscular

Muscles less responsive/  
non-responsive  
Feels "heavy", "leaden", like  
"wet concrete"  
Muscles painful, burning  
tingling or 'buzzing'

### Energy level

A falling, pooling, or  
"pulled plug" sinking  
sensation  
in "shutdown"  
"locked in my body"  
"my battery is low"  
"wired but tired"

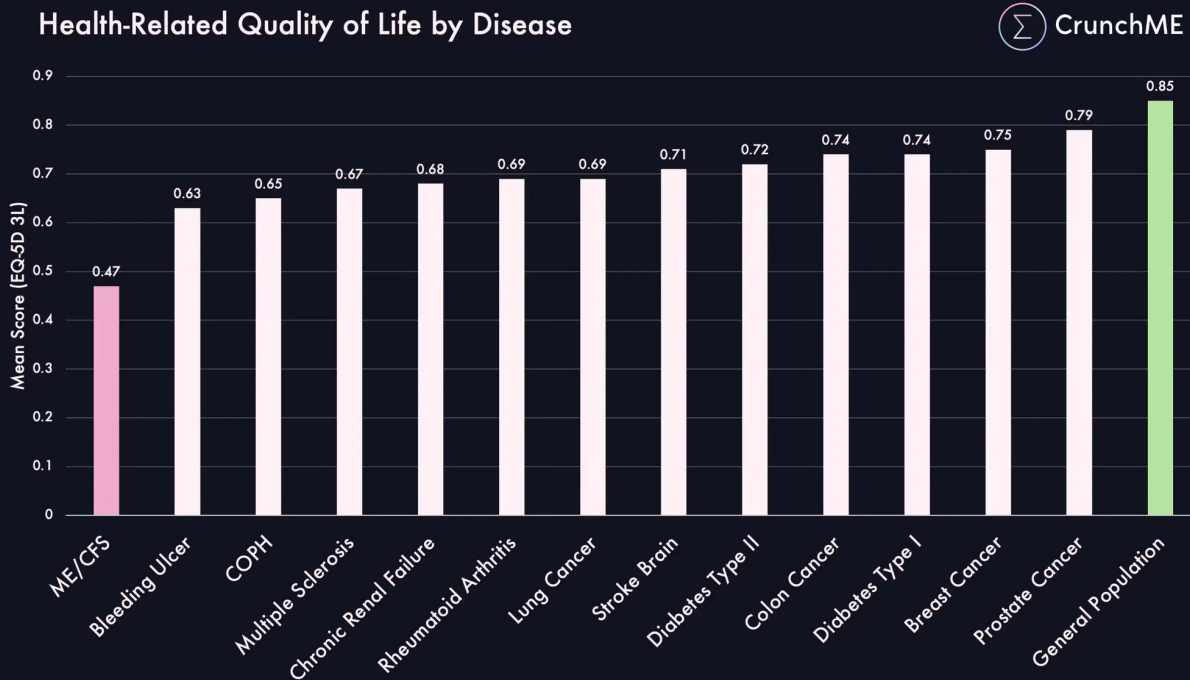
### Metabolism

Feeling "poisoned"  
"like a hangover"

### PEM is not:

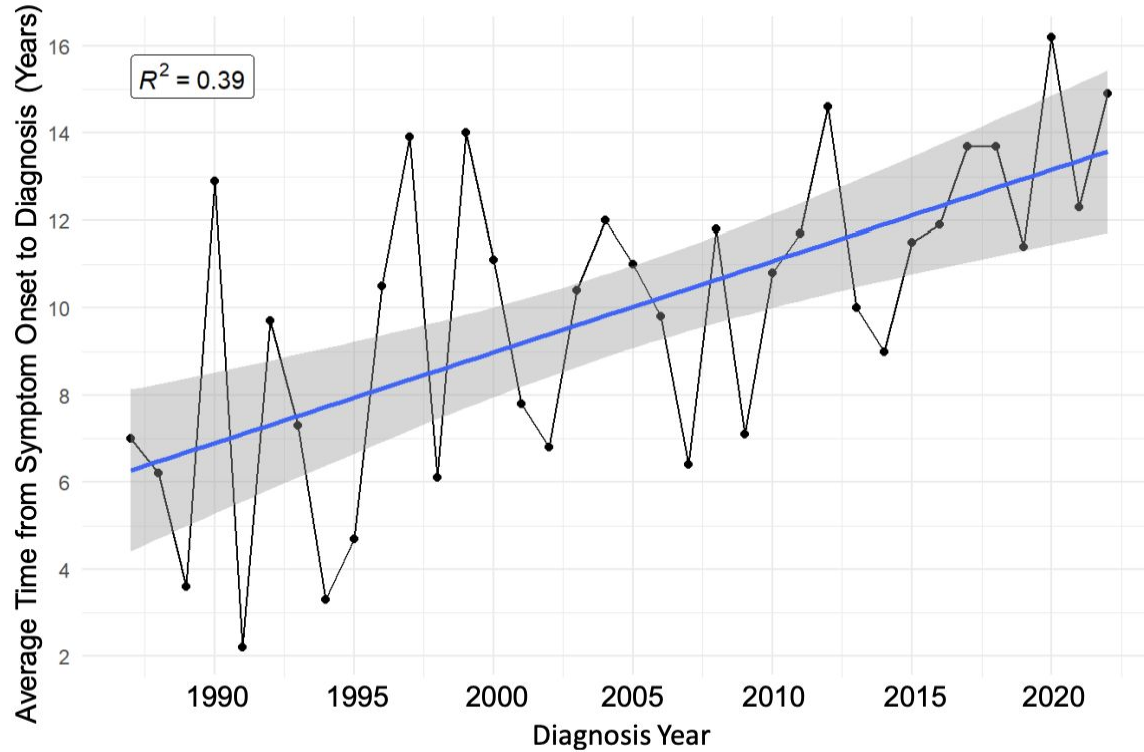
- Being more tired than usual after activity
- Deconditioning
- Second-day muscle soreness
- Necessarily relieved by sleep

# ME/CFS has one of the worst qualities of life of any disease



Sources: Hvidberg et al. (2015) - <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0132421>

**Figure 1:** Average time in years from symptom onset to ME/CFS diagnosis by diagnosis year





*Florence Nightingale* AN ANGEL OF MERCY, *Scutari Hospital 1855*

"When all the Medical Officers have retired for the night, and silence and darkness have settled down upon those miles of prostrate sick, she may be observed alone, with a little lamp in her hand, making her solitary rounds."

Lady Ann Anderson, in the Times, 1865



INTERNATIONAL

**ME/CFS**

**AWARENESS**

**DAY**