

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome/ Epstein-Barr Virus

BECKY'S STORY

"Did you ever feel tired when you awoke from a good night's sleep? I did." Becky spent her sixteenth year always being tired. As Becky says, "I would come home from school, go to my room, and lay down for a minute. Next thing I knew, Mom was calling me for dinner, and I'd have to force myself to get up and eat. I would make it through dinner, an hour or two of homework, and then drop. This same routine would start all over again the next morning.

Close friends would tell me how tired I looked. They were right. I always had bags under my eyes and my complexion seemed dull. My hair even lost its luster. I often felt depressed and that there was no use to anything.

About every six-weeks I would go to the doctor. First our family doctor thought I had mononucleosis. He took a blood test that came out negative. Then he decided my tiredness was caused by a thyroid problem, so he ordered more tests. Nothing showed up. Next I saw an endocrinologist and she tested me for a number of things. She began with the thyroid, glucose tolerance, and went to other glands, but could find nothing. A gynecologist examined my female organs and they turned out to be fine. Finally, we just stopped going to doctors because it was getting no where. They had done test after test and kept calling for more tests. If tests could have solved the problem, I would have been cured.

My mom read about the Epstein-Barr virus and decided I should be tested. This test turned out to be negative, too. It proved nothing for the hundredth time. All I wanted to do was sleep, and I always woke up tired.

My school work suffered, not because I couldn't get the work, but because I was in a fog from being so tired, and it took all my energy to concentrate. All I wanted to do was rest. Gym class, which met three days a week, was the worst. A session of calisthenics left me totally exhausted. When I started to fall asleep in school, Mom decided my problem was really serious; it wasn't that I was just going through adolescence.

Finally our family doctor had me see a psychologist. It was the last straw when she started asking me about boys and sex. I was so tired that the last thing on my mind was boys or sex. I simply refused to see her anymore.

I started losing my friends because I didn't have the stamina to do anything outside of school work. I stopped going to athletic events and other social activities, simply because I was too tired.

My mother was beside herself with worry. She spoke to anyone who would listen. Sometimes it was embarrassing, like the time she asked a shoe salesman. One day she spoke to a Shaklee distributor. This lady gave her a short write-up on a woman who had recovered from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. Mom decided to put me on the same nutrition program. I was willing to try anything, so I figured a few vitamins couldn't hurt.

Mornings became a nutrition ritual in our house: Instant Protein, Vita-Lea, B-Complex, vitamin C, and calcium-magnesium. The Shaklee lady had told my mother the magnesium was important. I didn't need my monthly periods

anymore in order to get bloated. The Instant Protein did it for me quite effectively.

After about a month, the bloating from the protein had gone. In retrospect, I should have started with a smaller amount. I actually started to like the stuff and affectionately called it my "morning mulch." Although I didn't realize it at the time, I stayed after school a few times with friends. Then, about a month after I started on my mulch program, I went to a basketball game. It was fun and I even went out for hamburgers with the kids afterward.

By spring, I was doing things with my friends after school. I asked a boy to the Sadie Hawkin's dance and got invited to the spring hop. My social life started coming back. Sure, I liked to sleep in on Saturday and Sunday mornings like everyone else, but I wasn't waking up tired any longer.

We never did figure out what I had. Our family doctor says he's seen these symptoms in a number of people- mostly women or teenage girls. He said the medical experts call it Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). They think it's caused by a virus. Unfortunately, there's no cure; it just takes time to leave your system.

I believe him when he says there's no known cause or cure, but my experience says nutrition helps you get better sooner. Shortly after Mom started me on the program, I could feel my strength returning. Sure, it didn't happen overnight, or even in a month, but I got a little better every day. I only wish I had started my nutrition program sooner."

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is officially recognized as a disease. It has been identified in teenagers and adults of all ages. A study at the Washington University School of Medicine found that there was no clear link with any known virus. The most widely known viruses tested were the Epstein-Barr virus and coxsackieviruses. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome seems to develop after an acute illness such as the flu. However, CFS can appear several months after the flu is gone.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a malaise-inducing illness in which the most common symptom is a lack of refreshing sleep. Teenagers in the Washington study got six to twelve hours of sleep and woke up tired. Exercise caused them to have extreme fatigue. Becky described both symptoms clearly. A secondary symptom is depression and a feeling of uselessness. Sound familiar?

Along with chronic fatigue, symptoms vary and include headaches, an inability to concentrate, just like Becky experienced, sore throats, nausea, and even vomiting. Typically, a teenager with CFS will miss an average of 34 days of school in a six-month period. Some teenagers in the Washington study missed 80 days in six months!

BARBARA'S STORY

"I have always been full of energy. I'm a grandmother three times now and run my own color and image business. One spring, just over a year ago, I started waking up with headaches in the back of my head. The winter that year had been particularly damp, and I picked up a good case of the flu like many other people in our area, but I recovered from it more quickly than most of my friends.

What began as headaches when I awoke, led to an upset stomach before an hour had passed. Neither the headaches nor nausea persisted more than a few hours and wouldn't come every day, but they would leave me worn out. I began to realize that I

was always tired. Things I did on a regular basis became a serious chore.

I was accustomed to working all day at my business and relaxing in the evening with my husband. We have an indoor pool and our recreation routine included a swim before dinner to get our heads clear. I would always feel refreshed after my swim. I found myself going upstairs to change into my bathing suit and just falling asleep on the bed. The bed was like a siren calling me. My husband Bill would have to wake me up and I'd usually skip the swim with the excuse that I would just go and make dinner. Then I'd forget to make dinner or just sit in a chair and watch the news on television.

I began to lose my concentration during the day. In my business I speak to a lot of people, mostly women. A few times I found myself forgetting their names in the middle of a conversation. Worse yet, my mind would drift and I'd forget what we were talking about.

Now and then, I would try to go to bed early, about 9:30 p.m., thinking I'd wake up in the morning feeling refreshed. Somehow, I thought that all I needed was a good night's sleep. After sleeping like a log for about ten hours, I'd still get up feeling tired. If it wasn't for my husband, our business would have failed. He carried the ball.

I began to look around for something that would help me. Doctors usually remind me of my age and would talk about slowing down; or they'd say it was a post menopausal malaise, whatever that meant. One doctor did a thyroid test, but the results were negative. Every doctor took a blood test. Sometimes I think they believed that testing would cure the disease. Finally, I listened to a friend selling vitamins. She was full of energy, so I figured, if I could get half of her energy, I'd be okay.

I started on Vita-Lea, Instant Protein, B-Complex, Herb-Lax, and a few other supplements, including LiquiLea. Bill bought \$181 worth of supplements that very evening. Starting the next morning, he made me take one or two of them every day. I gagged on the protein the first time, and was told to start with one-third of the amount I was taking. Within a month, I stopped having the headaches and started swimming again. I didn't climb out of the pool exhausted. In fact, just climbing out of the pool was a step forward. Within two months I was waking up with some energy. People started asking me what I had done, because I had so much energy. They said I looked relaxed.

Before that, I couldn't get myself looking good. I had to use more make-up and add conditioners to my hair to give it body. Good friends said I looked tired. They would comment that I was working too hard and that we should take a vacation. Little did they know that I was sleeping more than they were.

Now, a year later, I realize I had what is called Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I also understand how the nutrition program helped my body fight it off and rebuild itself. I've read up on this disease and concluded that each expert has their own opinion. Some say it's magnesium, but my magnesium tests were always normal. I don't believe that anyone really knows what causes or cures this disease. In fact, I believe that our body does the curing, if it gets the right nutrients. I also believe that anyone who hasn't had the disease, has no idea of what it's like. That includes the doctors. Unless you've felt the "bone-deep" tiredness that takes all your strength, you don't know what it is to be really tired. It doesn't compare to being tired from a hard workout or from plain hard work. It's worse than being tired from caring for children or grandchildren or even the tiredness I experienced when my mom

died. There's a character to the tiredness that defies description. You have to experience it to understand the despair it brings."

IT'S IN THEIR HEADS

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is a real disease. Most experts believe it results from a virus, but they don't know how. The most likely viral candidate is the Epstein-Barr virus. In fact, CFS has also been called the Epstein-Barr Syndrome. However, some people with CFS don't test positive for the Epstein-Barr virus and some people who test positive for it don't have CFS. If this sounds confusing, it is, and probably will be for some time to come.

When someone has CFS, they can't seem to become rested; they're always tired. You could say this is a mental or at least a partially mental condition. However, a mental component doesn't make it any less real. It just makes it more difficult for science to attack. The fact that victims of this disease feel completely exhausted after exercise, proves it's not mental; and that they feel tired after a good sleep, proves that it has a mental component. The headaches, nausea, and lack of concentration also confirm this.

Nutrition definitely helps in two ways: it gives short-term energy, and provides the tools for the body to rebuild. Both people in these two cases got more energy and stamina when they used Instant Protein. Instant Protein contains two sources of energy: one is carbohydrates, and the other is derived from the non-essential amino acids it supplies. Besides short-term energy, the body needs to rebuild whatever system or systems have gone awry. Building anything in the body requires protein, energy, and nutrients. So, it's not surprising that the victims felt better, looked better, and seemed to maintain consistent recovery once they started a complete nutrition program. Since B-Complex seems to help, it suggests that metabolism is involved.

Reports of recovery times required for CFS range from one year to five years. These time periods imply that the body must restore itself. Self healing is always a slow proposition. In short, the recovery time is not like an infection that an antibiotic can knock out in a couple of weeks; or a malfunction in an organ, like high blood pressure, that can be corrected with medication. Nutrition makes a big difference, and nutrition is always slow-motion medicine. That's why time is so important.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Scala was educated at Columbia (B.A.), Cornell (Ph.D.), and Harvard (Post-doctoral studies) Universities.

He has spent his career in research, research management, and teaching. His accomplishments include over fifty published papers on research in nutrition, biochemistry, and biology. His teaching includes courses for undergraduate, graduate, medical, and dental school students.

As a research manager, Dr. Scala held positions at Procter and Gamble, Owens-Illinois, Unilever, General Foods, and was the Senior Vice-President of Scientific Affairs for the Shaklee Corporation. He now devotes his energies to writing and speaking for the general public.

Dr. Scala lives with his wife Nancy in Lafayette, California. For recreation, they sail the ketch La Scala from its home port on San Francisco Bay.