

# Cochrane Corner

## Exercise therapy for chronic fatigue syndrome

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Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is an illness characterised by persistent medically unexplained fatigue of more than six months duration. Sufferers experience significant disability and distress, which may be further exacerbated by a lack of understanding from others, including health professionals. CFS is a serious problem thought to

affect up to 1% of the general population though the reported prevalence ranges from 0.006% to 3% depending on the setting and criteria used. It has also been known as Royal Free disease, Iceland disease, neurasthenia, myalgic encephalomyelitis ('ME'), and post-viral fatigue syndrome. However, CFS is the term that has been adopted

and clearly defined for the purpose of research in this area. I recently read an article about fibromyalgia and it sparked my interest in this topic.<sup>1</sup>

### Clinical bottom line

Exercise therapy is worthwhile for chronic fatigue syndrome. It may not be better than antidepressants.

Treatment	Success	Evidence	Harms
Exercise therapy versus control	Exercise participants were less fatigued than controls. In some studies exercise was not better than fluoxetine. Exercise was almost significantly more acceptable than control	Cochrane review <sup>2</sup>	More dropouts in the exercise group

### References

1. Da Costa D, Abrahamowicz M, Lowensteyn I, Bernatsky S, Dritsa M, Fitzcharles MA, Dobkin PL. A randomized clinical trial of an individualized home-based exercise programme for women with fibromyalgia: Rheumatology (Oxford). 2005 Nov; 44(11):1422-7.
2. Edmonds M, McGuire H, Price J. Exercise therapy for chronic fatigue syndrome. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2004, Issue 3. Art. No.: CD003200. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD003200.pub2.

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## Ethnic diversity projected to increase

'New Zealand's Maori, Asian and Pacific populations are projected to grow faster than the European population, according to updated 2001-base national ethnic population projections released by Statistics New Zealand. Under mid-range Series 6 projections for the respective ethnic populations: the Maori population is projected to increase 29 percent from an estimated 590,000 in 2001 to 760,000 in 2021; the Asian population 145 percent from 270,000 to 670,000; the Pacific population 59 percent from 260,000 to 420,000; and the European population 5 percent from 3.07 million to 3.23 million.'

[http://www2.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/pasfull/pasfull.nsf/web/Media+Release+National+Ethnic+Population+Projections+2001\(base\)+%E2%80%93+2021+update?open](http://www2.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/pasfull/pasfull.nsf/web/Media+Release+National+Ethnic+Population+Projections+2001(base)+%E2%80%93+2021+update?open)