

Outlook on Lifestyle

Chronic fatigue is making its mark

By Peter H. Gott, M.D.

Chronic fatigue is one of the most common ailments for which patients seek medical attention. In most cases, the cause is easily uncovered and ranges from anemia, infection and tumors to drug abuse, depression and ennui — or, as one of my patients put it, "sufferin' from too much."

Within the larger group of people with chronic fatigue is a sub-set of patients, usually young women, who experience tiredness that is difficult to agnose. Typically, they complain of exhaustion, difficulty concentrating, headache, sore throat, muscle pains, tender lymph glands, insomnia, weight loss and "poor resistance."

In the past, doctors examined and tested these patients, found no physical cause for their symptoms and dismissed their complaints as "functional" or psychosomatic. Some physicians latched onto the diagnosis of "post-infectious asthenia," because the fatigue seemed to follow mild infections — usually viral, often trivial. Such patients, who were predictably dissatisfied at being labeled emotionally unstable, sought out self-diagnoses, of which chronic yeast (candida) infection and hypoglycemia were the most popular. However, no reputable scientist has verified that chronic candida or a tendency to low blood

DR. GOTT



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sugar are major causes of the exhaustion syndrome.

In the mid-1980s, improved laboratory analysis permitted researchers to document the presence of a blood protein to Epstein-Barr virus, the cause of mononucleosis. The doctors hypothesized that chronic fatigue states were due to reactivation of the virus; chronic EBV, dubbed "yuppie flu" by the media, became a fashionable diagnosis for thousands of weary women. However, studies reported this past December provided proof that chronic EBV is not the answer to the chronic fatigue question: Patients failed to show more widespread or more severe EBV infection than did normal, non-fatigued volunteers. Evidently, EBV infection is ubiquitous and, in most patients, does not cause chronic fatigue.

Similarly, the majority of patients have not been found to have herpes,

Lyme disease (an infection spread by tick bites) or fibromyalgia (a poorly understood syndrome of muscle aches and joint pains).

Rather than re-affirming the pedagogy that such patients have "mental problems," investigators are now going back to square one in hopes of discovering what, if any, attribute is common to all patients with chronic fatigue. Not content to tag debilitated patients psychoneurotic or just plain depressed, doctors are now searching for a biochemical explanation. This is reflected in a growing federal concern: The Centers for Disease Control are launching two new studies this year to define the chronic fatigue syndrome. Doctors are taking the disease seriously.

Although some practitioners are skeptical about the syndrome, many experts now believe that the millions of people who suffer from undiagnosed chronic exhaustion probably are experiencing an unidentified malfunction of their immune systems. The disease is usually triggered by a virus infection that seems to scramble the normal immune response in certain people who have a genetic predisposition, including a tendency to depression and anxiety.

At present, chronic fatigue is a diagnosis of exclusion, meaning that the common demonstrable causes of tiredness have to be ruled out. Chron-

ASK KATHY

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Q: Since I was a small child, I've heard, "You are what you eat." But I wonder, how much credence does this statement carry?

A: It's true: you are what you eat! Junk food, quick-stop restaurants and hectic lifestyles combine to create a nation of obese individuals.

For the many millions of busy people, prepackaged foods seem to be an easy solution. However, many of these foods are highly refined and quickly digested, leaving one feeling hungry shortly after a meal.

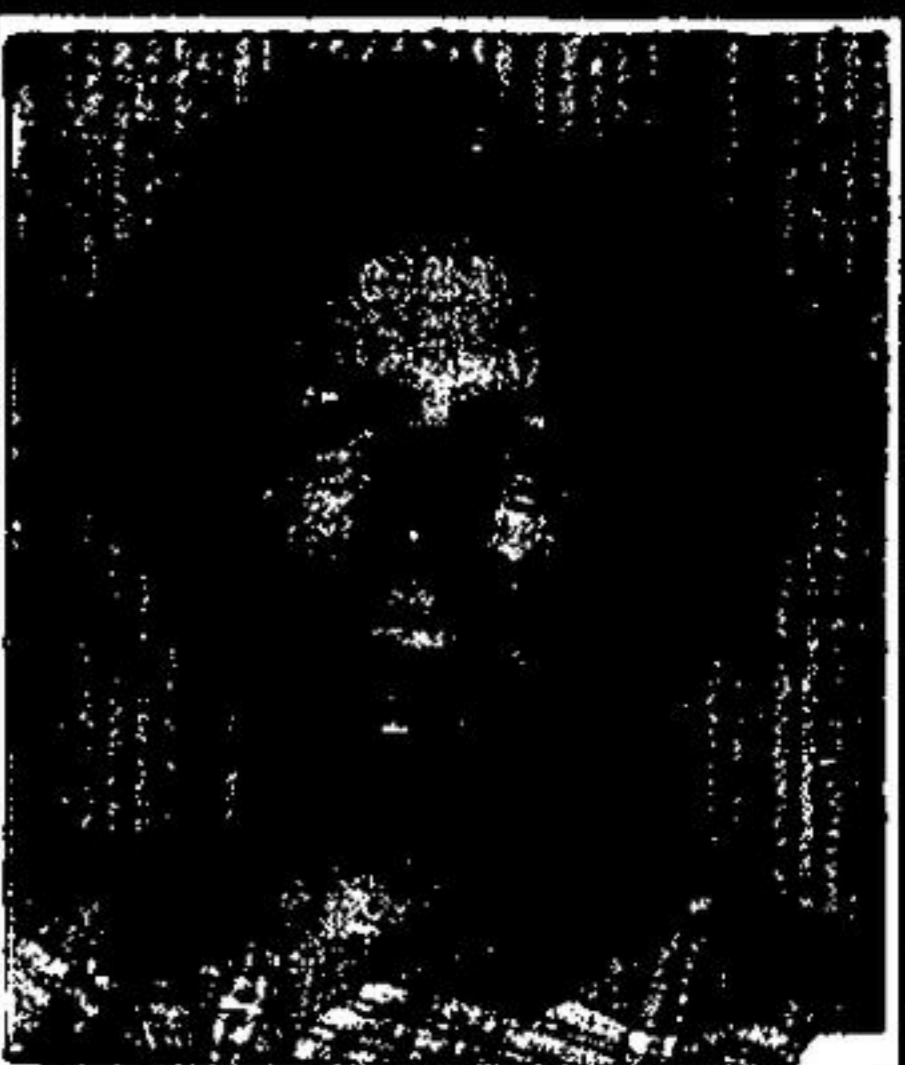
Preparing nutritious foods ahead of time will help combat this problem, and will also help ensure the family of good nutrition.

Clean vegetables and prepare salads ahead of time. At serving time, broil lean

meat, toss salad and heat vegetables in a microwave oven. Serve fresh fruit for dessert. Your family will have a nutritious meal that will contribute to good health and high energy.

Before doctors can manage chronic fatigue syndrome in a comprehensive and rational fashion, more research is needed to define the disease and its (probable) multiple causes. Once CDC releases its findings, definitive help should be on the way.

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KATHY HAJAS
Diet Center Counselor

Contact your local Diet Center at 877-2900 for more ideas on how to make good nutrition a way of life.

Topping on cheesecake hides flaws

By Polly Fisher

DEAR POLLY — How can I prevent my cheesecake from cracking on top? — S.K.

DEAR S.K. — We've talked about this before, but I get this question so often that it must be one that's bothering a lot of people! I'm glad to hear that there are so many dedicated cheesecake bakers out there, since it's one of my absolutely favorite desserts!

The bad news is that cracking is not totally preventable. Sometimes no matter how much care you take, the cake simply cracks and that's it! There will be nothing you can do about it except to (a) accept the fact that a crack in cheesecake is natural and therefore naturally beautiful, or (b) cover up the top with a luscious fruit or sour cream topping!

To minimize cracking, bake the cake in a moderately slow oven — 300 degrees — and use a water bath. That is, put the cake pan in a larger pan, then fill the larger pan with water until it comes up the sides of the cheesecake pan about 1 inch. This helps the

POLLY'S POINTERS



POLLY FISHER

cake to bake evenly, keeps things moist and helps to prevent cracking. Never open the oven door while baking the cake, since sudden temperature changes can cause cracking, too.

And remember, you can't taste the crack! — POLLY

RECIPE OF THE WEEK: What would life be without an occasional brownie? Surely not as sweet! These whole-wheat brownies are not innocent of calories, fat and sugar, but they do carry a bonus of fiber and nutritious goodness from 100 percent whole wheat. It's a yummy way to get your family to eat more whole grains — but only as a special treat, please!

With an electric mixer or food processor, cream ¼ cup butter, 1 cup brown sugar, 1½ teaspoon vanilla, 3 eggs, ½ cup cocoa powder, ¼ teaspoon baking powder and ¼ teaspoon salt until smooth and creamy. Stir in ¼ cup whole-wheat flour (preferably pastry flour, but all-purpose whole wheat will do). Spread batter in a greased 8-inch-square pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 40 to 45 minutes or until brownies are set and just begin to pull away from the edges of the pan. Cool before cutting into squares to serve. Makes 16 two-inch brownies.

You'll enjoy more whole-wheat treats such as peanut butter cookies, zucchini cookies, apple spice bread and more with the easy recipes in my newsletter "Whole-wheat Quick Breads and Cookies." Send \$1 for each copy to POLLY'S POINTERS, in care of this newspaper, P.O. Box 93863, Cleveland, OH 44101-5863. Be sure to include the title. — POLLY

Polly will send you a Polly Dollar (\$1) if she uses your favorite Pointer, Peeve or Problem in her column. Write POLLY'S POINTERS in care of this newspaper.

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OUR LANGUAGE

by Jeffrey McQuain

A bit of ash or burned material is cinder. It starts with c, not s. There's no sin in cinder — just ask Cinderella.

Use treatise for a formal discussion or argument in writing. Don't be fooled by the spelling, though; not every treatise is a long treat.

Q. I was told to use more concrete nouns in my writing. What's a concrete noun?

A. Concrete nouns name "real" things that can be perceived by the senses, such as house, car, sun, etc. Such words as fear and pleasure are abstract nouns, not concrete. Concrete is, of course, a concrete noun.

Do you have a question or comment about our language? Please write to Jeffrey McQuain, in care of this paper © 1989, NEWSPAPER ENTERPRISE ASSN.

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