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Alcohol : How Badly Can It Affect CFS Sufferers?

By Claire Williams

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The wonders of alcohol.

The achilles heel for many people. The 'norm' for some others. And poison if you have CFS/PVFS/M.E....

I remember when I first got Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome/CFS back in 1995, I thought that having a drink or two wouldn't affect me any differently to my PRE-CFS days.

Unfortunately I didn't realise what I was doing to myself. I didn't know how badly alcohol can affect the severity of CFS...

Nowadays I don't touch alcohol at all, and haven't done so for a few years now. I'd rather see at least a few hours in the day instead of being bedridden for weeks on end because of one alcoholic drink!

Because when you have CFS/M.E., you might as well be pouring arsenic down your throat...

-----SIDE NOTE-----

Okay – so that comparison might be a little 'dramatic', but you get what I mean right?

-----SIDE NOTE-----

You see when you have CFS/M.E., you are likely to develop ****alcohol intolerance****...

The smallest alcoholic drink – even a tiny bit, can send you into a relapse – as I learnt the hard way many years ago.

Having an alcoholic drink now and again was enough to tip the severity of my CFS over the edge and put me in bed indefinitely.

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When a ****normal**** person gets drunk they may feel a bit bad for a day or so, after which, they're back to 'normal', bouncing back and raring to go.

But when a person with M.E./CFS gets drunk – or even has just one drink, they're likely to feel like 'death warmed up' for what seems like an eternity!!!

Personally, I don't actually like alcohol much so I don't miss it. But even if I did, I have realised that alcohol no longer makes me feel the way it used to before I had CFS...

Drinking alcohol now feels like I'm feeding myself poison, and my body reacts accordingly – i.e. a relapse – and I suffer the consequences for a long, long time afterwards.

Unfortunately, us CFS sufferers are just not strong enough to resist the poisons of alcohol. So it's

unfortunately a case of accepting it, or getting much, much worse.

As Dr Shepherd writes in his book 'Living With M.E.':

"Some people who previously enjoyed and tolerated regular consumption of alcohol without any adverse effects, now find that even small amounts make them extremely unwell."

-- p214, Dr Shepherd, 'Living With M.E.' --

So if you have M.E./CFS, it is likely that you may have developed an intolerance to alcohol.

And that's not forgetting that alcohol also affects the effects of antidepressants (often prescribed to CFS sufferers to treat their fatigue and to help sufferers sleep)! So if you're taking antidepressants, it's definitely something to bear in mind.

Having CFS/FM can be a very lonely and devastating experience and depression can be a very real and serious symptom for many CFS/FM sufferers.

So the last thing you need is to take substances that make you feel worse.

And guess what?

Yep, you've guess it, alcohol is also a depressant. So it's not a great thing to drink if you're depressed! And according to Dr Shepherd, many sufferers sadly do turn to alcohol...

But alcohol is no answer.

Apart from probably making you feel depressed, you could also develop an alcohol dependency!

What's more, if you ****are**** alcohol intolerant, then it would make it much harder for yourself to recover from M.E./CFS (pretty much impossible even), while you keep putting alcohol in your body.

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And here's some more 'food for thought'...

When you think about how badly a CFS sufferer can be affected by ****one**** alcoholic drink, then how badly could alcohol be affecting you if you're drinking more???

So there you go – a whole list of reasons why you might think twice about drinking anything remotely alcoholic while you have CFS/M.E.

While you may no longer be alcohol intolerant once you have recovered from CFS/M.E., it may well be a major culprit for preventing you from ****recovering**** from your CFS/M.E while you still have it.

I didn't know about the possible effects of alcohol when I first had CFS/M.E...

... and I suffered the consequences. My M.E./CFS got worse. A lot worse. And I was only having a couple of drinks now and again!

So I hope this article arms you with enough info for you to make an educated decision about alcohol either way.

You never know – it may well make the difference...

Claire Williams is editor of

and has suffered from Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome/ Chronic

Fatigue Syndrome since 1995.

She created '

' to help Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Fibromyalgia sufferers to deal with

the condition – from handling their money worries, to recovering from their illness....

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What's causing my Depression and Fatigue?

By Paul Shearstone

Chronic Fatigue and Chronic Depression are absolutely systemic in our society today. Recent studies done by the AMA and CMA purport one in four people in North America are suffering from some form of chronic fatigue or depression and it's expected eight out of ten of us will experience similar afflictions in our lifetime. But numbers like these don't speak to the cause and only tell half the story.

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In June of this year, my new book entitled, "Until You've Walked the Path" hit the bookstores. In it, I chronicle my own real life battle and recovery from CFS [Chronic Fatigue Syndrome]. I am pleased to say that from the responses I've received, the book has touched many people in a positive way, both those suffering from the disease, as well as caregivers, looking for new ways to aid the afflicted.

In conversations about CFS, the one question I am asked the most is, "What's causing My [their] chronic depression and fatigue?" Followed by, "Is it just stress?"

I'll admit I am not a doctor and have no medical training, however, I have done a fair bit of research over the last decade and I am a real CFS Survivor. That said, it is my belief there are three fundamental 'Camps' if you will, that can cause depression or fatigue and it is absolutely essential to determine what camp you are in to expedite speedy recovery.

Camp #1: CFIDS [Chronic Fatigue Immune Dysfunction Syndrome]

CFIDS is the new acronym for most immune dysfunctional disorders which covers a broad base of causes and outcomes. More specifically, the factors that can bring on CFS are viral. In my case I was diagnosed with the Epstein-Barr Virus [EBV]. Another common virus known to cause CFS is the ME Virus [Myalgic Encephalomyelitis]. An outcome associated with CFS sufferers is Fibromyalgia; an excruciatingly painful disease that effects all the muscles and joints in the body.

I could go on but the important point to understand is that most of what causes 'Real' Chronic Fatigue Syndrome is most often viral. These viruses attack the immune system causing acute un-wellness, fatigue and depression. Stress is another immune-weakening phenomenon and is often a major cause for CFS. On the other hand, motivators like post viral infection - as it was in my case - is known to be much of the cause because of the damaging consequences it can affect to an otherwise healthy immune system. One outcome is Depression and Fatigue.

Camp #2: Mood Disorders

Mood disorders are perhaps easier for most people to understand. Not the diseases themselves but rather the fact that there are commonly known diseases like: Bi-Polar, Manic-Depression and Schizophrenia, to name but three. We all know they can cause behavioral - often unpredictable - changes in those afflicted. Another outcome is Depression and Fatigue.

Camp #3: Substance Abuse

Whether it's drugs or alcohol, [prescribed or otherwise], many people fall victim to their affects that over time, can clearly evolve into conditions of un-wellness.

Stress-relief is often the reason for those who use drugs and alcohol on a regular basis and one need not be addicted to experience many of the health deteriorations that ultimately come about. Another outcome, of course, is Depression and Fatigue.

By now you may be seeing a bit of an assertion I am making in this article which now compels me to

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make two important points:

1. Depression and Fatigue can be outcomes from many different motivators.

2. It is critical for sufferers to seek out immediate professional help in determining precisely what is causing their fatigue and depression.

I have seen too many people needlessly wither away with diseases like these, never getting the right help. Many of them try to hide their problem and shrink into the shadows because it's not a glamorous disease and for the most part, is still a little misunderstood - even by many in the medical field.

My advice is to find the right medical specialist who deals specifically with what's causing your fatigue and depression. Understand that no doctor can be a specialist at everything and that the medicine, treatment and care for someone with Schizophrenia would be entirely different from what's required to treat someone with substance abuse or a viral infection. The specialist would be just as different.

It's also vitally important for those afflicted and caregivers alike to know that there is a short window of opportunity in getting diseases like these under control. That is to say, from my observation and experience, the longer one goes without proper diagnosis and treatment, the harder it is and less likely it is, recovery can be achieved.

Chronic Depression and Fatigues is not something one chooses to have and treatments like "Suck it up soldier!" or love deprivation do not work. Ignoring it works even less.

The Bottom Line:

What's causing Your Depression and Fatigue could be many things. You need to align yourself with the right specialist, the right medication and the right treatment As Soon As Possible!

The good news? You can recover from it and you can triumph over it! I am living proof.

Paul Shearstone is President of The CFIDS Foundation of Canada Inc. He is an International Keynote Speaker, Author, Writer, Motivation, Corporate Ethics, Sales, Time & Stress Management Specialist.

Paul enlightens and challenges audiences as he informs motivates and entertains.

To comment on this article or to book Paul for your next successful event we invite to contact Paul

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or

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For more information and how to order Paul's new book, "Until You've Walked the Path" please visit

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"Every day millions of people struggle valiantly with the pain of CFIDS and Depression... the very real physical pain and the excruciating psychic pain of the soul. Paul gives both voice and face to their pain. More importantly, he gives expression to their courage, resilience, and valour. By his account of his own remarkable journey, he gives hope to the millions of others who are still on theirs".

Karen Liberman
Executive Director
Mood Disorders Association of Ontario

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