

evenly throughout the day, gradually increasing physical activity, planning a return to work, and resuming other activities. The intervention, which typically consists of 12–14 sessions spread over 6 months, helps CFS patients gain control over their symptoms.

GET targets deconditioning and exercise intolerance and usually involves a home exercise program that continues for 3–5 months. Walking or cycling is systematically increased, with set goals for maximal heart rates. Evidence that deconditioning is the basis for symptoms in CFS is lacking, however. CBT and GET appear to improve fatigue primarily by changing the patient's perception of the fatigue and also by reducing the focus on symptoms. In general, CBT is the more multifaceted treatment, which may explain why CBT studies tend to yield better improvement rates than GET trials.

Not all patients benefit from CBT or GET. Predictors of poor outcome are medical (including psychiatric) comorbidities, current disability claims, and severe pain. CBT offered in an early stage of the illness reduces the burden of CFS for the patient as well as for society in terms of decreased medical and disability-related costs.

PROGNOSIS

Full recovery from untreated CFS is rare: the median annual recovery rate is 5% (range, 0–31%), and the median improvement rate is 39% (range, 8–63%). Patients with an underlying psychiatric disorder and those who continue to attribute their symptoms to an undiagnosed medical condition have poorer outcomes.