

Navigating life with chronic fatigue syndrome

Living with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) can present significant challenges, but adopting certain strategies can make coping easier.



1. Understanding Relapses and Remission: ME/CFS often follows a pattern of relapses and remissions. Recognising this cycle can help you manage your energy levels effectively.

2. Managing Daily Activities: During relapses, simple tasks like showering may feel overwhelming. Allocate extra time for challenging activities and prioritise rest during remission to avoid overexertion.

3. Balanced Exercise: Exercise is crucial for overall health, but individuals with ME/CFS must approach it cautiously. Work with healthcare professionals to establish personalised exercise limits and pace yourself to prevent post-exertional malaise.

4. Nutritional Strategies: Adopting a balanced diet, such as the Mediterranean Diet, rich in healthy fats and avoiding triggers like sugar and caffeine, can help manage symptoms. Eating small, frequent meals can maintain energy levels and alleviate nausea.

5. Memory Support: Memory loss is common in ME/CFS. Utilise tools like day planners, smartphone reminders, and mental exercises to support cognitive function and manage daily tasks effectively.

6. Work Accommodations: If you are employed, you may qualify for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Flexible schedules, designated rest areas, and job instructions can help mitigate the impact of symptoms on work performance.

7. Disability Benefits: If your condition prevents you from working, you may be eligible for disability benefits through private insurance or Social Security.

8. Navigating Relationships: Educating friends, family, and coworkers about ME/CFS can foster understanding and support. Chronic fatigue can strain personal relationships, so open communication and empathy are essential for maintaining healthy connections despite the challenges posed by the condition.

By implementing these strategies and seeking support from healthcare professionals and loved ones, individuals with ME/CFS can navigate the complexities of the condition more effectively and enhance their overall quality of life.

HEALTH ACHIEVEMENTS

Calls for a concerted drive towards SDGs

STAR HEALTH DESK

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Results Report 2023, the most comprehensive to date, showcases the achievement of key public health milestones, even amid greater global humanitarian health needs driven by conflict, climate change, and disease outbreaks.

The report is released ahead of the 2024 Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly, which runs from May 27 to June 1, 2024. WHO's revised programme budget for 2022-2023 was US\$ 6726.1 million, incorporating lessons learned from the pandemic response and addressing emerging health priorities.

Triple-billion targets: The report shows advancements in several key areas, including healthier populations, universal health coverage (UHC), and health emergency protection.

In terms of UHC, 30% of countries are moving ahead in coverage of essential health services and providing financial protection. This is largely due to increased HIV service coverage.

Regarding emergency protection, though the coverage of vaccinations for high-priority pathogens shows improvement relative to the COVID-19 pandemic-related disruptions in 2020-2021, it has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels. The Pandemic Fund's first disbursements totaled US\$ 338 million in 2023, supporting 37 countries with financing to strengthen prevention, preparedness, and response capacities.

Prominent points: The world's first malaria vaccine, RTS,S/AS01, was administered to more than two million children in Ghana, Kenya, and Malawi during the biennium, reducing mortality by 13% among children eligible for vaccination. WHO's prequalification of a second vaccine, R21/Matrix-M, is expected to further boost malaria control efforts.

Elsewhere, 14 countries eliminated at least one neglected tropical

disease from 2022-2023. Bangladesh eliminated 2.

The first-ever all-oral treatment regimens for multidrug resistant tuberculosis were made available in 2022, allowing the highest number of people with tuberculosis to get treatment since monitoring began almost 30 years ago.

More than 75% of people living with HIV are receiving antiretroviral therapy, with most achieving viral suppression, meaning they cannot infect others. WHO's guidance and support have helped countries like Botswana achieve significant progress

launched the initiative in 2020.

The way forward:

The report acknowledges significant disparities in health outcomes, disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and that persistent health workforce shortages require investments in education and employment.

Looking ahead, WHO's Programme Budget for 2024-2025 aims to balance investment in the Organisation's normative functions with the need to strengthen country offices. It aims to fund 80% of the planned budget of high-priority items,



in controlling HIV transmission.

Tobacco use is declining in 150 countries, 56 of which are on track to achieve the global target for reducing tobacco use by 2025.

An additional 29 countries developed multisectoral national action plans on antimicrobial resistance during the biennium 2022-2023, bringing the total to 178 countries.

Following the Director-General's call to eliminate cervical cancer, another 25 countries have introduced the human papillomavirus vaccine, bringing the total to 58 that have introduced the vaccine since WHO

thereby accelerating progress towards meeting the triple billion targets of GPW 13 (the current WHO strategy for the period 2019-2023).

Commitment to global health:

Thanks to the launch of the World Health Data Hub, Member States access to health data and clearances of national estimates were streamlined.

WHO will work with existing and new donors and other partners through an inclusive engagement process that will culminate in a high-level financing event in the fourth quarter of 2024.

Source: World Health Organisation



RETHINKING HAPPINESS

Strategies for cultivating joy

In contemporary psychology, the age-old adage suggesting that happiness is as elusive as a butterfly is being met with skepticism. While Henry David Thoreau's sentiment resonates with the notion of contentment being a fleeting pursuit, a growing body of research argues that happiness is not solely determined by chance but can be actively pursued and achieved through intentional efforts.

While genetics may influence an individual's baseline level of happiness, studies suggest that approximately 40% of happiness is within our control, influenced by our thoughts, behaviours, and relationships. This suggests that individuals can elevate their happiness levels by actively managing their emotions, thoughts, and interactions with others.

Practical strategies for enhancing happiness include cultivating gratitude through daily reflection on positive aspects of life, fostering forgiveness to reduce bitterness and resentment, countering negative thoughts through cognitive restructuring and mindfulness practices, and engaging in meaningful activities that promote a state of "flow" and align with personal values.

Contrary to the belief that material possessions lead to happiness, studies show that lasting joy stems from strong social connections, close friendships, and engaging in activities that challenge and fulfil us.

Ultimately, while some people may have a genetic predisposition to happiness, cultivating a positive mindset and nurturing meaningful relationships can lead to a more fulfilling and joyful life, challenging the idea that fate alone determines happiness.

Unveiling the secrets to global health success

In a recent study published in PLOS Global Public Health, Dr Nadia Akseer and her colleagues at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health shed light on what drives success in public health across various countries. They focused on exceptional cases where health interventions have shown remarkable results, even in countries with limited economic resources.

Their research involved analysing 31 previous studies from the Exemplars in Global Health (EGH) programme, covering topics like child mortality, vaccine delivery, and COVID-19 response. These studies spanned 19 countries across Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the Caribbean. The aim was to identify common factors contributing to the success of these health programmes.

They identified eight key themes that appeared frequently among the positive outliers:

1. Efficient data systems: Countries with effective health programmes often had robust systems in place for collecting and analysing health data, allowing them to track progress and make informed decisions.

2. Effective leadership: Strong leadership played a crucial role in guiding and implementing successful health interventions.

3. Effective stakeholder coordination: Collaboration among various stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, and communities, was essential for programme success.

4. A capacitated workforce: Having trained and motivated healthcare workers was vital for delivering quality health services.

5. Intentional women's empowerment: Empowering and involving women in decision-making processes proved beneficial for improving health outcomes.

6. A conducive national policy environment: Countries with supportive policies and regulations for health programmes were more likely to succeed.

7. Sustainable financing: To sustain long-term health interventions, adequate and stable funding was necessary.

8. Outreach: Successful programmes often include proactive outreach efforts to reach vulnerable populations and ensure they receive essential health services.

These themes are consistent with previous efforts to understand what drives improvements in global health and align with the World Health Organisation's Health Systems Framework.

The researchers believe that these findings can inform national health policies and strategies. By understanding the common factors behind successful health programmes, policymakers, funders, and other stakeholders can better allocate resources and maximise impact.



Dr Akseer emphasised that countries achieving significant progress in public health often prioritise similar strategies. By sharing key lessons learned from these success stories, the hope is to assist country leaders, funders, and global partners in developing evidence-based policies that can enhance health outcomes worldwide.

This research essentially emphasises that the delivery and support of effective public health interventions are just as important as the interventions themselves. By focusing on these common drivers of success, we can work towards better health outcomes for everyone, regardless of economic status.

Ensuring effective governance for pandemic preparedness

STAR HEALTH REPORT

In an urgent letter addressed to the Co-Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body Bureau, the Working Group on Amendments to the International Health Regulations (2005), and WHO Member States, concerns have been raised regarding the governance of the proposed Pandemic Agreement. As negotiations continue, it is imperative to emphasise principles of leadership and accountability, ensuring that governance arrangements are robust and enduring.

The proposed establishment of a Conference of the Parties (COP) akin to climate agreements is commendable, providing a platform for sustained focus on pandemic preparedness and response. However, it is urged that heads of state and government participate regularly, not solely during extraordinary meetings, given the ever-present threat of pandemics. Additionally, annual meetings of the COP are advocated for, rather than the proposed five-year interval, to maintain vigilance against evolving pandemic threats.

Furthermore, the letter highlights the necessity of regular reporting, preferably annually, to address potential gaps in preparedness promptly. An independent Secretariat hosted by WHO is recommended to ensure transparency and accountability, fostering inclusive participation of civil society stakeholders.

Ultimately, the governance of the Pandemic Agreement must be steadfast and adaptable, laying a foundation for long-term effectiveness. Decisions made now will shape the trajectory of pandemic preparedness for decades to come, underscoring the urgency of robust governance arrangements.

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Major Services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asthma management Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Pleural disease Sleep disorders Respiratory infections Bronchiectasis Interstitial lung disease and sarcoidosis Tuberculosis (TB) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lung cancer screening Chest physiotherapy HRCT chest, CTPA, Plain CT chest Spirometry, DLCO, FeNO Diagnostic and therapeutic bronchoscopy PCR for detection of 6 respiratory pathogens Smoking cessation clinic Pulmonary rehabilitation
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