

*CFIDS is an alternative term for CFS and stands for Chronic Fatigue and Immune Dysfunction Syndrome

CFS is a syndrome (collection of symptoms) for which no specific cause has yet been found. Various factors are thought to possibly contribute to it, including Epstein Barr Virus (Glandular fever), neck problems, nutritional deficiency and yeast overgrowth.

Characteristic symptoms of CFS include: incapacitating fatigue (profound exhaustion and very poor stamina), problems with concentrating and short-term memory, accompanied by ?flu-like symptoms, joint and muscle pains, sore throat, headache and unrefreshing sleep.

Some patients may suffer from Neurally Mediated Hypotension (see below).

Brain mapping techniques suggest that part of the brain has abnormal blood supply in 60% of people with CFS. Lack of blood flow means that vital supply oxygen and glucose to the brain is impaired.

In 1999, an article in The CFIDS Chronicle (from the Chronic Fatigue Association of America) reported on research that suggested that some patients with CFS and fibromyalgia might have undetected compression of the brain stem or upper part of the spinal cord.

In 2001, these findings were reproduced by Drs Rosner, Bailey and Flechas, who described similar problems in the brainstem and upper cervical spinal cord in patients with fibromyalgia (FMS), a condition sometimes diagnosed in patients with arachnoiditis.

Some individuals may have congenitally narrowed or mis-shaped spinal canal or foramen magnum (through which the spinal cord passes to join the base of the brain); however, MRI scans may not pick this up because the curvature of the spine is not taken into account, which makes the diameter of the spinal canal appear larger than it really is.

Dr. Rosner, an American expert, believes that Neurally mediated hypotension (NMH) seen in CFS may well be a good marker for previously undetected cervical stenosis.

The term cervical stenosis: (spondylosis) refers to a degenerative process of the cervical spine resulting in narrowing of the spinal canal and neural foramina (where nerve roots exit) in the neck, producing compression of the spinal cord and nerve roots.

Often this occurs due to wear and tear with ageing, with bony spurs (osteophytes) being formed, or enlarging of the large ligament running down the vertebrae, the ligamentum flavum, which may buckle and put external pressure on the spinal canal.