



VA/DoD CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC MULTISYMP TOM ILLNESS

Department of Veterans Affairs
Department of Defense

Patient Summary

I. What is Chronic Multisymptom Illness?

People who have chronic multisymptom illness (CMI) suffer from health problems that are not explained by any other diseases. It is important to ask your healthcare team for information regarding CMI and treatment options that may be helpful. This complex condition has also been called medically unexplained symptoms, unexplained illnesses, or medically unexplained physical symptoms.

Did You Know?

If you are suffering from medical symptoms that are not explained by another diagnosis, and have been feeling ill for more than six months, you may be experiencing CMI. These medical symptoms may include:

- Excessive tiredness;
- Muscle or joint pain;
- Headaches;
- Abdominal pain or changes in bowel habits;
- Concentration or attention problems

II. Diagnosis

There are no tests currently available that can diagnose CMI. Talk to your healthcare team about any and all symptoms you may be experiencing. Your providers may take a thorough history and perform a physical and psychological evaluation. This includes understanding your symptoms and determining whether you have other illnesses. To see whether you have another medical condition that may better explain your symptoms, your healthcare team may also ask you to get additional tests.

III. Treatment

It is important to work with your healthcare team to develop a personalized treatment plan to manage symptoms and improve your ability to do daily activities.

There are many behavioral health treatments, complementary and integrative health therapies, and medicines that may help individuals with CMI. Depending on the symptoms you experience (for example, pain, fatigue, gastrointestinal), you and your provider may develop a plan that includes:

- Exercise or other physical activity, such as yoga or tai chi
- Behavioral health treatments
- Acupuncture
- Medicines

IV. Frequently Asked Questions

- **Is CMI the same as Gulf War Illness?**

After every modern military combat deployment, some Service Members have reported multiple chronic symptoms following their return. While Service Members who were deployed to the Persian Gulf region in 1990-1991 report more of these symptoms, some Service Members who served in other deployments may also experience CMI.

- **What contributes to CMI?**

The exact cause of CMI is unknown. However, research shows some medical, psychological, and occupational/environmental factors may be associated with the development of CMI.

Categories	Factors
Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obesity • History of smoking • Alcohol misuse and use disorder
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • History of physical or sexual abuse • Behavioral health concerns • Traumatic experiences or post-traumatic stress disorder
Occupational/Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gulf War or other combat deployments • Chemical exposures

- **Where can I find more information?**

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center – a national VA Post-Deployment Health Resource that provides post-deployment health expertise to Veterans and their healthcare providers through clinical programs, research, education, and risk communication. Find out more here: <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/>.

Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Patient Care Services/Public Health – an office within the Veterans Health Administration that serves as the leader and authority in public health. Find out more here: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/>.

Psychological Health Center of Excellence – a center that provides information on deployment health and healthcare for healthcare providers, Service Members, Veterans, and their families. Find out more here: <http://www.pdhealth.mil/>.