

Guided exercise may help chronic fatigue patients: study

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An expert-guided, self-help exercise program may help people with

chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), a new study suggests.

Two hundred CFS patients did workouts for 12 weeks with phone or online video support from a physiotherapist. The program slowly increases physical activity (such as a few minutes walking) once participants have established a daily routine.

Researchers say it may be a good way for CFS patients to begin managing their symptoms without traveling to a clinic, which may tire them. Besides [extreme fatigue](#), CFS can cause muscle and joint pain, sore throat and tender lymph nodes, headaches and problems with memory and sleep.

The study was published June 22 in *The Lancet*.

"We found that a self-help approach to a graded exercise program [GES], guided by a therapist, was safe and also helped to reduce [fatigue](#) for some people with [chronic fatigue syndrome](#)," study lead author Lucy Clark said in a journal news release. She is a research fellow at Queen Mary University of London, in England.

Researchers are now investigating whether the benefits lasted beyond the 12-week study.

Clark noted that graded exercise is designed to improve patterns of activity and may require some patients to be less active at the beginning.

"The aim is to progress carefully to improve, under the supervision of a CFS-experienced therapist, rather than pushing people too hard and towards a setback. Offering the therapy as a self-help approach, supervised by a physiotherapist, could increase access and avoid the fatiguing effects of travel for the intervention," she said.

Dr. Daniel Clauw, director of the Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center at the University of Michigan, praised the study in an accompanying journal editorial.

"The finding that graded [exercise therapy](#) is effective even when [exercise](#) is not being witnessed and directly guided by a physiotherapist is a substantial advance, since many [patients](#) with chronic fatigue syndrome and other functional impairment have difficulty getting to physiotherapy or do not have access to appropriately trained physiotherapists," he wrote.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [chronic fatigue syndrome](#).

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