

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis: International Consensus Criteria (ICC)

Assessment and Diagnosis

Excerpts from the International Consensus Primer for Medical Practitioners. To read the full primer, including Assessment and Diagnosis operational notes, pediatric considerations, please see:

http://sacfs.asn.au/download/me_international_consensus_primer_for_medical_practitioners.pdf

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis is an acquired neurological disease with complex global dysfunctions.

Post-Exertional Neuroimmune Exhaustion

Compulsory

This cardinal feature is a pathological inability to produce sufficient energy on demand with prominent symptoms primarily in the neuroimmune regions. Characteristics are:

1. Marked, rapid physical and/or cognitive fatigability in response to exertion, which may be minimal such as activities of daily living or simple mental tasks, can be debilitating and cause a relapse.
2. Post-exertional symptom exacerbation: e.g. acute flu-like symptoms, pain and worsening of other symptoms
3. Post-exertional exhaustion may occur immediately after activity or be delayed by hours or days.
4. Recovery period is prolonged, usually taking 24 hours or longer. A relapse can last days, weeks or longer.
5. Low threshold of physical and mental fatigability (lack of stamina) results in a substantial reduction in pre-illness activity level.

Immune, Gastro-intestinal & Genitourinary Impairments

At least one symptom from three of the following five categories

1. Flu-like symptoms may be recurrent or chronic and typically activate or worsen with exertion. e.g. sore throat, sinusitis, cervical and/or axillary lymph nodes may enlarge or be tender on palpitation
2. Susceptibility to viral infections with prolonged recovery periods
3. Gastro-intestinal tract: e.g. nausea, abdominal pain, bloating, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)
4. Genitourinary: e.g. urinary urgency or frequency, nocturia
5. Sensitivities to food, medications, odors or chemicals

Neurological Impairments

At least one symptom from three of the following four categories

1. Neurocognitive Impairments

- Difficulty processing information: slowed thought, impaired concentration e.g. confusion, disorientation, cognitive overload, difficulty with making decisions, slowed speech, acquired or exertional dyslexia
- Short-term memory loss: e.g. difficulty remembering what one wanted to say, what one was saying, retrieving words, recalling information, poor working memory

2. Pain

- • Headaches: e.g. chronic, generalized headaches often involve aching of the eyes, behind the eyes or back of the head that may be associated with cervical muscle tension; migraine; tension headaches
- • Significant pain can be experienced in muscles, muscle-tendon junctions, joints, abdomen or chest. It is noninflammatory in nature and often migrates. e.g. generalized hyperalgesia, widespread pain (may meet fibromyalgia criteria), myofascial or radiating pain

3. Sleep Disturbance

- • Disturbed sleep patterns: e.g. insomnia, prolonged sleep including naps, sleeping most of the day and being awake most of the night, frequent awakenings, awaking much earlier than before illness onset, vivid dreams/nightmares
- • Unrefreshed sleep: e.g. awaken feeling exhausted regardless of duration of sleep, day-time sleepiness

4. Neurosensory, Perceptual and Motor Disturbances

- • Neurosensory and perceptual: e.g. inability to focus vision, sensitivity to light, noise, vibration, odour, taste and touch; impaired depth perception
- • Motor: e.g. muscle weakness, twitching, poor coordination, feeling unsteady on feet, ataxia

Energy Metabolism/Ion Transportation Impairments

At least One Symptom

1. Cardiovascular: e.g. inability to tolerate an upright position - orthostatic intolerance (OI), neurally mediated hypotension (NMH), postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), palpitations with or without cardiac arrhythmias, light-headedness/dizziness
2. Respiratory: e.g. air hunger, laboured breathing, fatigue of chest wall muscles
3. Loss of thermostatic stability: e.g. subnormal body temperature, marked diurnal fluctuations; sweating episodes, recurrent feelings of feverishness with or without low grade fever, cold extremities
4. Intolerance of extremes of temperature

