

13th August 2020

Dear ME Association/MEAction UK,
NHS Guidance on the Management of Post COVID Fatigue

Thank you for your recent emails on post Covid-19 fatigue and for your interest and advice on the Your Covid-19 Recovery website. The website acknowledges the range of symptoms and wide fluctuation in symptom severity that people post COVID report, and provides general advice for those who believe they have had Covid-19 and still have symptoms. I would like to reassure you that the content on Your Covid-19 Recovery was developed with a wide range of health care professionals and academics, including representation from colleagues with experience in managing post viral fatigue such as the Royal College of Occupational Therapists. It was also developed with input from people who have experienced Covid-19 including those with ongoing symptoms.

You refer to the NICE guideline ME/CFS (CG53) which was published in 2007. This guideline was consulted but is clear that the advice on fatigue provides for people with myalgia encephalomyelitis and chronic fatigue syndrome should not be translated to the post viral fatigue after Covid-19.

'...it should not be assumed that the recommendations apply to people with fatigue following COVID19. The recommendations on graded exercise therapy in CG53 only apply to people with a diagnosis of ME/CFS as part of specialist care, and CG53 is clear that this should be part of an individualised, person-centred programme of care, with GET only recommended for people with mild to moderate symptoms.'

NICE is currently considering its recommendations on graded exercise therapy and their advice about may subsequently change. NICE plans to consult on their updated guidance in November 2020, and should the guidance recommend a different approach this would of course be reflected in the information provided on the Your Covid-19 Recovery Website.

The Your Covid-19 recovery website reflects the current guidance (most recently updated on 3rd August) from NHS England and NHS Improvement on the after-care needs of inpatients recovering from COVID-19:

Of people who have been critically ill, 10% could develop chronic fatigue. Although some people who have had COVID-19 may experience post-viral fatigue, there does not appear to be an association with post-viral fatigue



and diagnosis of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) or myalgia encephalomyelitis (ME). For those who do experience chronic fatigue, there is conflicting evidence regarding benefits or harm of pacing. Graded exercise therapy (GET) should be offered to those with mild or moderate CFS and only provided to those who choose these approaches.

Could I lastly reassure you that the 'What is fatigue?' section on the Your Covid-19 Recovery website suggests seven ways to approach fatigue, that includes relaxation, sleep, eating well, prioritising activity, delegating and keeping an activity diary, which are equally emphasised to provide a balanced approach.

We will continue to monitor closely and respond to the emerging evidence and consult with clinical and academic colleagues, and experts in the field of Covid-19 to ensure that the information on the Your Covid Recovery website represents the best current evidence-based advice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Powis', written in a cursive style.

Professor Stephen Powis
National Medical Director
NHS England and NHS Improvement