



About the Cause

What is the ME | FM Society of BC?

The ME|FM Society of BC is a registered Canadian charity working to support and advocate for people living with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME) and/or Fibromyalgia (FM). Their purpose is to educate and increase awareness of ME and FM within the health care community, government and public; to provide information and resources for patients and their families; to champion causes impacting the ME and FM community; and to promote state-of-the-art research, testing, diagnosis and treatments. They are also dedicated to building an inclusive, accessible organization that creates opportunities for the participation of patients, carers and family members at every level. **Learn more:** www.mefm.bc.ca

What is Myalgic Encephalomyelitis?

And what is the connection to Long Covid?

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (known as ME or ME/CFS¹) is a chronic multisystem disease characterized by debilitating exhaustion unrelieved by sleep, and symptoms that worsen after even minor physical or mental activity (known as [post-exertional malaise](#) or PEM). First classified as a neurological disease by the WHO [in 1969](#), ME impacts many body systems, and can cause everything from chronic pain and muscle weakness to cardiac issues, immune problems and cognitive dysfunction.

“Mild” ME typically reduces function by [at least 50%](#), while [moderate to severe cases](#) can resemble living with heart failure or end-stage cancer for decades. It has the [lowest quality-of-life score](#) of all common diseases, and prior to the pandemic, affected [over half a million Canadians](#) and an estimated [17-24 million people worldwide](#). Despite this, ME is [seldom taught in medical schools](#); an estimated [90% of patients](#) aren’t even diagnosed; and there are no FDA-approved treatments or cures.

Around [80% of ME cases](#) are triggered by viruses, and the number of people with ME is increasing exponentially right now [due to COVID-19](#). Conservatively, [10-20% of Covid patients](#) (including adults and children with mild/asymptomatic cases) go on to develop Long Covid or associated conditions. Of these, [several preliminary studies](#) suggest that around half develop ME. [Learn more here.](#)

¹ Or, controversially, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) or Systemic Exertion Intolerance Disease (SEID)

What is Fibromyalgia?

Fibromyalgia (FM) is a complex chronic illness that affects [over half a million Canadians](#) and around [2-5%](#) of the general population. Characterized by widespread burning pain and fatigue unrelieved by sleep, it can also cause other debilitating symptoms including brain fog, irregular heartbeat, severe sleep problems and digestive issues.

As with ME, symptoms can vary not just from person to person but from day to day, and some patients may even appear healthy to the casual observer. Nevertheless, fibromyalgic pain can be unrelenting, and the UK's National Health Service ranks it as one of the [20 most painful health conditions](#).

Fibromyalgia is also associated with impaired joints, [fascia](#) and other connective tissues – an issue shared with [Ehlers-Danlos syndrome \(EDS\)](#), a genetic disorder with which it can co-occur. In fact, fibromyalgia can occur alongside several other serious conditions, including [ME](#), [autoimmune diseases](#), [irritable bowel syndrome](#) and [chronic migraines](#), and the overlapping symptoms can affect every aspect of a person's daily life. [Learn more here](#).

Further reading:

- Backgrounder - Unmet healthcare needs of British Columbians with ME: <https://bit.ly/MEUnmetNeeds>
- MEpedia: <https://me-pedia.org/>
- ME & Long Covid: <https://www.mefm.bc.ca/me-and-long-covid-resources>