



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), Long-Covid and/or Fibromyalgia (FM). They work to educate the healthcare community, government and public; provide information and resources for patients and their families; champion issues that impact the ME, Long-Covid and FM community; and promote state-of-the-art medical 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. | www.mefm.bc.ca

What is Myalgic Encephalomyelitis?

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (also known as ME or ME/CFS)¹ is a complex chronic 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). Classified as a [neurological disease](#) by the WHO since 1969, ME affects many body systems, and can cause everything from chronic pain and muscle weakness to heart 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](#), and an estimated [90% of patients](#) aren't even diagnosed. There are no FDA-approved treatments or cures.

Around [80% of ME cases](#) are triggered by viruses or infections, and the number people with ME is increasing exponentially right now [due to Covid-19](#). [Several preliminary studies](#) suggest that around half of Long Covid patients meet the criteria for ME. | [learn more](#)

¹ occasionally referred to as SEID, or as chronic fatigue syndrome (which some consider outdated)

What is Long Covid?

Long Covid (LC)² refers to cases where Covid survivors experience persistent symptoms, or develop new symptoms and health damage, following an infection with COVID-19. These symptoms can emerge on a delay, and may last for many weeks, months or years. They may also lead to [new lifelong conditions, such as ME/CFS](#).

People of [all ages](#) and [genders](#) can develop Long Covid, and research shows it can affect previously-healthy adults and children; people who have been vaccinated; and those who had mild or [asymptomatic](#) Covid infections. Conservatively, at least [10-30% of Covid cases](#) result in Long Covid, with risks that [multiply with reinfection](#). At least [1 in 9 Canadian adults](#) have developed Long Covid so far, and the majority have not recovered.

Long Covid can cause [over 200 possible symptoms](#), include [debilitating fatigue](#) and [post-exertional malaise](#); [breathing problems](#); [heart problems](#); [blood vessel damage and clots](#); [immune system damage](#); and [neurological issues](#) like memory loss. Many Long Covid patients must reduce their work or school hours, or [cannot work at all](#). Due to the ongoing rise in cases, the government of Canada has [referred to Long Covid](#) as a "potential mass-disabling event". | [learn more](#)

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](#)

² * sometimes referred to as long-haul Covid, Post-Covid Condition (PCC), or post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2 infection (PASC)

Visit the online charity event:

Benefit.OperaMariposa.com

Further reading:

- Backgrounder - Unmet healthcare needs of British Columbians with ME:
<https://bit.ly/MEUnmetNeeds>
- MEpedia: <https://me-pedia.org/>