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VA/DoD CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF CHRONIC MULTISYMPPTOM ILLNESS

Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Defense

Patient Summary

QUALIFYING STATEMENTS

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense guidelines are based upon the best information available at the time of publication. They are designed to provide information and assist decision-making. They are not intended to define a standard of care and should not be construed as one. Neither should they be interpreted as prescribing an exclusive course of management.

This Clinical Practice Guideline is based on a systematic review of both clinical and epidemiological evidence. Developed by a panel of multidisciplinary experts, it provides a clear explanation of the logical relationships between various care options and health outcomes while rating both the quality of the evidence and the strength of the recommendations.

Variations in practice will inevitably and appropriately occur when clinicians take into account the needs of individual patients, available resources, and limitations unique to an institution or type of practice. Every healthcare professional making use of these guidelines is responsible for evaluating the appropriateness of applying them in the setting of any particular clinical situation.

These guidelines are not intended to represent TRICARE policy. Further, inclusion of recommendations for specific testing and/or therapeutic interventions within these guidelines does not guarantee coverage of civilian sector care. Additional information on current TRICARE benefits may be found at www.tricare.mil or by contacting your regional TRICARE Managed Care Support Contractor.

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What is Chronic Multisymptom Illness?

If you suffer from any of the following unexplained medical symptoms, and have been feeling ill for more than six months, you may be experiencing Chronic Multisymptom Illness (CMI).

- *Excessive tiredness;*
- *Muscle or joint pain;*
- *Headaches;*
- *Stomach problem;*
- *Concentration or attention problems;*

People that have CMI suffer from health problems that are not explained by any other diseases. It is important to refer to your healthcare team for information regarding CMI and potential treatment options. Clinical practice guidelines are available to practitioners which are used to help you improve your health. Other terms that have been used to describe this complex condition include medically unexplained symptoms, unexplained illnesses, or medically unexplained physical symptoms.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is CMI the same as Gulf War illnesses?

After every modern military combat deployment, some Service Members have reported illnesses characterized by multiple chronic symptoms upon their return. While Service Members that were part of the Gulf War report more of these symptoms, the experience of CMI is not unique to those who served in any specific combat era.

How may my provider and the health care team diagnose CMI?

Talk to your healthcare team about any and all symptoms that you may be experiencing. Your providers will first try to determine whether you are at risk for urgent conditions (e.g., heart attack) and treat those accordingly. They may then do a thorough physical and psychological evaluation and medical history, including understanding the severity of your symptoms and assessing for comorbid conditions. In order to diagnose whether you have CMI or another medical condition that may explain your symptoms, the healthcare team may also ask you to get additional tests. These can include blood tests and imaging scans.



What causes CMI?

The exact cause of CMI is unknown. However, research shows some medical, psychological, and occupational/environmental risk factors that may be associated with the development of CMI.

Medical	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obesity• History of smoking• Alcohol abuse
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical or sexual abuse• Mental health problems• Post-traumatic stress disorder
Occupational/Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gulf War deployment• Chemical exposure• Khamisayah exposure

Are there any treatments available for CMI?

Yes. There are a number of psychological therapies, complementary and alternative therapies, and medicines currently available to treat your symptoms. Depending on the type of symptom you are suffering from most (i.e., pain, fatigue, gastrointestinal) at any given time, your doctor may develop a treatment plan that includes interventions such as, but not limited to:

- Physical activity or exercise
- Diet and nutrition
- Behavior therapy
- Acupuncture
- Medicines

What can I do to help manage my symptoms?

The most important thing you can do is work with your health care team and talk about your experiences. They will use the information that you are able to provide and by using a collaborative, team-based approach, develop a comprehensive and personalized treatment plan.



Where can I find more information?

For more information, check out some of the following:

- **War Related Illness and Injury Study Center**— a National VA Post-Deployment Health Resource which provides post-deployment health expertise to Veterans and their healthcare providers through clinical programs, research, education, and risk communication. Find out more here: <http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/>
- **Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Public Health** – an office within the Veterans Health Administration which serves as the leader and authority in public health. Learn more about it here: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/>
- **Deployment Health Clinical Center** – a site designed to provide a gateway to information on deployment health and healthcare for healthcare providers, service members, veterans, and their families. Check it out here: <http://www.pdhealth.mil/>