

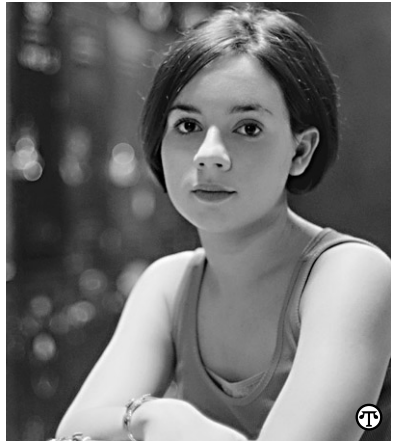
HEALTH AWARENESS

Children CAN Get Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

(NAPSA)—Chronic fatigue syndrome, also called chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome (CFIDS), is a serious medical condition that can affect children as well as adults. Children as young as five years old have been found to have CFIDS, although the onset is more common in puberty.

Physical and cognitive problems. Children with CFIDS exhibit symptoms similar to adults—including severe exhaustion, problems with concentration and memory, sore throat, tender lymph nodes, muscle pain and headaches—but children more commonly report dizziness, abdominal pain, rash and fever. The majority of children with CFIDS have an acute onset—symptoms appear suddenly within a few days or weeks, usually with a flu or mononucleosis-like illness.

High rate of misdiagnosis. While the physical symptoms may be similar in children and adults, a child's difficulty in effectively expressing how he feels can make it more challenging to identify and diagnose the illness. Often CFIDS in children is mistaken as a behavioral or emotional problem, in particular school phobia. The cognitive difficulties, including short-term memory loss and confusion, produced by CFIDS may be mistaken for attention deficit disorder (ADD). Failure to make a proper diagnosis can lead to isolation, insecurity, sense of failure, family stress and even long-term intellectual devel-



opment problems.

Educational impact. The vast majority of children with CFIDS experience difficulty with school performance due to the physical and cognitive symptoms imposed by the illness. Many must be home-schooled because they are too ill to attend classes. Children with CFIDS who cannot attend school miss out on important social and intellectual opportunities, affecting friendships, plans and dreams for the future.

The CFIDS Association of America offers a Web site on CFIDS youth issues, referrals to local support groups and other resources of interest to children (and adults) with CFIDS, their families, health care providers and advocates.

For more information, contact The CFIDS Association of America, PO Box 220398, Charlotte, NC 28222-0398 or visit www.cfids.org.