

# The CFIDS Association of America

*Working to conquer chronic fatigue and immune dysfunction syndrome (also known as CFS)*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **National Public Awareness Campaign on Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Launches Today**

Charlotte, North Carolina–November 3. The first-ever public awareness campaign about chronic fatigue syndrome is being launched today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Partnering in this education initiative is the CFIDS Association of America. The campaign is being launched at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, at 10:00 a.m.

This is the first nationwide education and awareness campaign for chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) in the United States. Although more than one million Americans suffer from CFS, less than 20% have been diagnosed, compromising their health care. This campaign is designed to educate the public and health care professionals about diagnosis and treatment of this medical condition. The theme of the campaign is “Get informed. Get diagnosed. Get help.”

Early diagnosis and treatment of CFS is of utmost importance. According to CDC research, the longer a person is ill before diagnosis, the more complicated the course of the illness appears to be. The campaign will help Americans learn to recognize the symptoms of CFS and to seek medical care if they think they or a family member may be suffering from this illness.

“Educating the public and health care professionals about CFS is critical to achieving better diagnosis rates, better care and a more compassionate social landscape for patients,” said Kimberly McCleary, president and CEO of the CFIDS Association of America, a nonprofit organization that educates the public, patients and health care professionals about CFS and funds research into the cause and possible treatments. “This campaign provides credible, evidence-based information on an illness that is still widely misunderstood.”

To help in the education effort, the campaign features national print advertising; public service announcements for TV, radio and print; and a traveling photo exhibit called “The Faces of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.” Two new websites, [www.cdc.gov/cfs](http://www.cdc.gov/cfs) and [www.cfids.org/cfs](http://www.cfids.org/cfs), provide information and downloadable materials for patients, their families and health care professionals.

Historically, chronic fatigue syndrome has been difficult to diagnose because there is no diagnostic test or biomarker to identify the illness. CFS is an “invisible illness,” and people with CFS often don’t look sick. Diagnosis is further complicated because the symptoms and severity of CFS vary considerably, with some patients disabled by the illness and others able to continue working part time or full time. A reliable diagnostic algorithm is available in the CFS Toolkit for Health Care Professionals, which is available online at [www.cdc.gov/cfs](http://www.cdc.gov/cfs).

CFS is characterized by at least six months of profound, incapacitating fatigue and postexertional malaise—a worsening of symptoms following physical or mental activity. Other defining symptoms include impaired memory or concentration, sleep problems, muscle pain, joint pain, headaches, sore throat and tender lymph nodes. While CFS strikes about four times as many women as men, both men and children are also at risk for getting the illness. Research indicates that the illness is most common in people aged 40-59, but it strikes people of all age groups. And, contrary to early misconceptions, CFS strikes people of all racial, ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

“Although there is no cure for CFS, there are effective treatments that can improve the lives of CFS patients,” said CDC Director Dr. Julie Gerberding, who will introduce the CFS campaign at the press conference today. “Our investment in this campaign is evidence that CDC sees a great need to provide accurate information to the public and health care professionals about this devastating illness. Getting correctly diagnosed with CFS is key to improving the lives of these Americans.”

To learn more about CFS, visit [www.cdc.gov/cfs](http://www.cdc.gov/cfs) and [www.cfids.org/cfs](http://www.cfids.org/cfs).