

Riding the sugar rollercoaster

Fenugreek By Marcus Web

There is a close association between the fatigue of chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) and the fatigue also related to fibromyalgia (FM) even when the FM is not directly linked to a case of CFS. What appears to underpin both is the concept of adrenal exhaustion. In health the adrenal glands produce hormones (most notably cortisol) that help the body manage stressful events. The famous 'fight and flight' response owes its ability to get us out of danger thanks to the other key adrenal hormone adrenalin. However, if stresses keep coming our way the gland switched to a chronic stress reaction that is lead by cortisol. One of the main functions of cortisol revolves around the regulation of our blood sugar levels. In the face of ongoing stress the adrenals become exhausted and the hormones they release falter resulting in many diverse symptoms one of which is hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar), which is closely related to fatigue and, interestingly, anxiety.



Get the diet right

As part of any good holistic approach to FM and / or CFS is a balanced diet with a slight skew towards cushioning the effects of dietary carbohydrates (sugars) on the bodies often inadequate blood sugar regulating systems. There is often a deep urge to seek out sugars, chocolates and starchy foods such as bread. Sadly, the temporary feel-good effect is very temporary and normally replaced by a nasty case of rebound fatigue. In the first instance, look to boosting the proteins in your diet; meat, fish, beans, nuts and cheese all buffer the sugar dips and help you feel satisfied after a meal and far less likely to hunt out the sugar fixes. In addition to getting the diet right certain culinary ingredients also appear to help balance out a rollercoaster blood sugar level. Fenugreek seeds have been attracting much attention over the years because of their apparent ability to improve blood sugar balance independent of the other key sugar regulating hormone insulin.

Fenugreek and folk medicine

Fenugreek is one of the oldest folk medicinal plants known. It was originally of Mediterranean origin but now its cultivated worldwide. Much of the recent fenugreek research has been carried out in India where the seeds have been

shown to aid diabetic sufferers obtain a more balanced sugar level when added to their daily meals. In addition to this, those regularly eating fenugreek also demonstrated improved cholesterol levels! In fact, work published in 2005 indicated that fenugreek seeds contained factors (probably the amino acid known as 4-hydroxyisoleucine) that may act independently of insulin to enhance glucose metabolism at the cellular level. While this may help a diabetic regulate their over all sugar levels for a FM/CFS sufferer this action may assist the cellular metabolic processes that are being affected by the adrenal exhaustion. In a more recent 2009 publication, fenugreek seeds were shown to be a very safe addition to the diet and offer a wide range of health benefits. While the effect on glucose metabolism appears to be fairly established research from Japan has demonstrated that fenugreek seeds improve exercise related endurance by promoting the livers ability to metabolise fatty acids for energy utilization. This is another aspect that may benefit FM/CFS sufferers who commonly report disabling fatigue after minimal physical activity. The potential to enhance the natural energy generating mechanisms and stimulate the cellular uptake and balanced use of glucose could make fenugreek a must try food for FM/CFS sufferers. The 2009 study recommended adding seeds to baked into bread but they can be easily incorporated into meals or taken in the form of a food supplement in capsule form if fenugreek is not to your taste! If opting for the capsule form of fenugreek seeds a 2-3 gram daily intake of the pure powder per day would be reasonable with meals.

Resources:

Fenugreek Seed supplements available from: www.nutricentre.com