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Dr. Teitelbaum Speaks on Fibromyalgia and CFS Treatments

NOVEMBER 10, 2011



Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum

Two weeks ago, I had the honor of helping to moderate a web conference with Dr. Jacob Teitelbaum as he spoke to the [Portland Area Fibromyalgia – ME/CFS Group](#). This is a summary of his talk. You can also sign up here to [join the PDXFibroCFS Group's private site](#) to gain access to a [recording of this webinar](#).

I've also included a special fibro tip of my own at the end, so you'll want to read all the way to the bottom... or you could just skip to the good part! *wink*

Dr. Teitelbaum is a board certified internist and Medical Director of the national [Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers](#) and Chronicity. He is the author of the best-selling book

[From Fatigued to Fantastic, Pain Free 1-2-3: A Proven Program for Eliminating Chronic Pain Now, Three Steps to Happiness! Healing Through Joy, Beat Sugar Addiction Now!](#), and his newest book, [Real Cause, Real Cure](#). Dr. Teitelbaum knows Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) and fibromyalgia as an insider – he contracted CFS when he was in medical school and had to drop out for a year to recover. It was a privilege and a delight to have him speak to our group.

First, a few statistics that Dr. Teitelbaum shared:

- 3.7-12 million Americans have fibromyalgia
- 1-4 million Americans have CFS
- Most patients struggle for 5-8 years before getting an accurate diagnosis of fibromyalgia or CFS
- \$210 million per year are spent on fibromyalgia drugs
- Average weight gain for someone with fibromyalgia or CFS is 32.5 pounds

Dr. Teitelbaum's book, [From Fatigued to Fantastic](#), is the first book I read many years ago when I suspected that I might have fibromyalgia or CFS. It

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FROM
FATIGUED

is an excellent read! It is essentially a textbook on how to get well. In it, he covers both natural and drug alternatives for helping with everything from sleep to pain control.

What I appreciated most about *From Fatigued to Fantastic* was that Dr. Teitelbaum covers what each drug and supplement does. When I was finally diagnosed and put on a "cocktail" of medications by my doctor, I was able to pull out this book and look up *exactly why* I was taking each medication.

In my case, I found that each drug that my doctor had put me on helped my body handle pain in a slightly different way. One blocked pain signals at the site of the painful nerves (Cymbalta). Another lowered the "volume" of the pain, decreasing the number of signals (Lyrica). Yet another changed how my brain perceived the pain once it got there (Zanaflex). Once I understood how they all worked together, I understood why it was important that I took *all of them, all of the time, as prescribed*.

If *From Fatigued to Fantastic* is a little too heavy of a read for you, Dr. Teitelbaum suggests reading *Beat Sugar Addiction Now!* He told us that it was written in a more user friendly format than *From Fatigued to Fantastic*, and could be easier to read for those suffering with "fibro brain."

Are you ready to S.H.I.N.E.?

One of the most valuable things Dr. Teitelbaum shared on our webinar was his SHINE protocol. SHINE stands for Sleep, Hormones, Infections, Nutrition, and Exercise as Able.

Using these protocols in a [recently published study](#), Dr. Teitelbaum shared that 91% of their active treatment group had "moderate to marked improvement." This means that using a mix of natural and prescription remedies, you CAN get your life back from fibromyalgia and CFS, just like I have.

As Dr. Teitelbaum went through his protocol, I was thrilled to learn that many of the things he was recommending were things that I did by instinct, or did with the recommendation of my doctors. In essence, I followed his protocols without knowing it, as I became well. (I had read *From Fatigued to Fantastic*, so perhaps this was in my subconscious as I was journeying along my path to wellness.)

Another thing that Dr. Teitelbaum said that mirrors my own journey is this: *use these treatments to help your body recover; then after 1-2 years, if you are feeling well, begin to wean off of them.* You don't necessarily have to stay on these things for the rest of your life.

Sleep

It is critical to get 8-9 hours of deep sleep every night. Suggestions to help this happen: calcium, magnesium, melatonin 5-HTP, Ambien, if under 10mg, Flexeril (cyclobenzaprine), trazodone, etc. at very low doses. If you are having cortisol issues, try a supplement called *Sleep Tonight*. You can read more on cortisol issues in my blog post, [Underlying Causes of Fibromyalgia and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome](#).

Normally, folks with fibromyalgia tend to have low blood pressure. This goes along with our adrenal issues. However, Dr. Teitelbaum said that if you have high blood pressure and you have fibromyalgia or CFS, be sure to have a sleep study to check for sleep apnea. Your blood pressure will be one of the key indicators here.

If Restless Leg Syndrome is a concern, check for iron deficiency. If you test and your ferritin



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is under 60, supplement with iron to treat RLS. One of our prior speakers, Cheryl Hryciw, of [The Frida Center for Fibromyalgia](#), mentioned that this can also be caused by low dopamine. Therefore, checking your dopamine levels could be important for you as well. Magnesium is also a key ingredient to relax tight muscles.

While you're at it, don't forget simple home remedies like keeping your bedroom dark and cool, and trying a hot bath or shower before bed. Lavender aromatherapy is also excellent for helping you to relax for bedtime.

Hormones

This is your body's control system. Your thyroid is your "gas pedal," while your adrenals are your "stress handlers."

Dr. Teitelbaum stressed that *"even mild under production of thyroid can make you feel sick as a dog."* Another tidbit he gave us is that Armour Thyroid, a natural glandular for thyroid treatment, is actually *more effective* at treating depression than some depression medications! Synthroid (levothyroxine), a synthetic thyroid medication, doesn't help depression at all. This is most likely because the natural glandular contains both T3 and T4 instead of just the T4 that is in the synthetic medications.

Have you ever wondered if you have adrenal exhaustion? Here's a tip Dr. Teitelbaum gave us: *"if a light switch goes off and the people around you have three seconds to feed you or they will be dead... then you have adrenal fatigue."* Do you recognize yourself or anyone you know in that statement? I've been there, done that. Fortunately, the people around me have a bit longer than three seconds these days!

Supplements that Dr. Teitelbaum suggests to help adrenals are: licorice, vitamin C, glandular adrenal, Vitamin B5, and DHEA. Lifestyle changes, however, will make the biggest long-term impact. In other words, learn to properly manage the stress in your life. For example, this might mean you need to stop watching the news if it stresses you out!



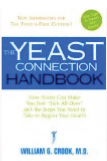
The best book I can recommend if you want to know more about adrenal exhaustion, and if it might be a contributing factor to your fatigue, is [Adrenal Fatigue: The 21st Century Stress Syndrome](#), by James L. Wilson. It is THE textbook on how to get well from adrenal exhaustion! Most of the work that I do with clients centers around how to take care of yourself first. If you can't do that, you can't get well. [Adrenal Fatigue](#) teaches you how to begin the process of caring for your body.

Infections

The main infection Dr. Teitelbaum spoke to us about was candida (yeast) overgrowth. He said that we should suspect candida in all fibromyalgia and CFS patients — even if there has been loads of testing done and the tests have all come back negative. Apparently the testing isn't very good, in his opinion, and there are too many false negatives. He believes that the best approach is to treat each person as if they have an issue with candida and see if they improve. If they do, then they had a candida overgrowth; if not, they didn't.

Candida feeds off simple sugars, so the best way to treat it is through your diet. Yes, that means cutting out sugar and simple carbs! Probiotics (in large amounts) are also very helpful, as well as Diflucan (fluconazole), an anti-fungal medication. Dr. Teitelbaum stressed that you must be on an anti-candida regime for quite some time to root it out. This isn't a one- or two-week program!

The classic book on candida overgrowth, if you'd like to read more on that subject is [The Yeast Connection Handbook](#), by William G. Crook, MD. As a side note, when I read this book the first time, I immediately called up my family and friends and said, "I've finally figured out what's been wrong with me my whole life!" It's a very powerful book!



Beyond candida, Dr. Teitelbaum suggested looking for parasites, viral infections, Lyme disease, Epstein-Barr virus, etc.

Nutrition

Our bodies are truly miraculous. When given the right tools, it heals itself, that's what our bodies were designed to do. As Dr. Teitelbaum said in our webinar, "giving your body what it needs to recover is critical." In other words, you have to give your body the right building blocks and tools so that it can do the work of healing itself.

As far as food goes, a high-protein, low-carb diet will keep you feeling the best. This is exactly what I got with the [nutritional program](#) that my doctor recommended to me, and I now recommend to my clients. Normally when you think high-protein, low-carb, you think: *lots of work*. At least I always did. With [this program](#), it's super simple and flexible — only one meal to cook yourself — and the program is even gluten-free.

Dr. Teitelbaum also stressed the importance for us to drink enough water. In fact, we may need to drink a lot more than we think we need. He gave this example, "You may say, 'I drink four times as much as my husband!' and that may be true. But you pee out five times as much!" He suggested just thinking about your lips; if they're dry, you're not drinking enough water — no matter how much you may already be drinking!

Another counter-intuitive item is to add salt to your diet. I learned this one when I read Dr. Wilson's [Adrenal Fatigue](#), mentioned above. Of course, you'll only want to do this if you have low blood pressure.

I have found salt to be particularly helpful for me in the morning and in times where I just feel a bit "off" somehow. Eating a pickle is a great way to get some extra salt. Pickle juice is also the [quickest way to end a muscle cramp](#) if you're in the midst of one.

Supplementation is necessary when you have fibromyalgia or CFS. You simply cannot get everything you need from the food you eat. You'll want to work with your doctor to check to see if you have any deficiencies in any major nutrients, such as the B Vitamins, Iron, Magnesium, etc.

Additional supplementation Dr. Teitelbaum suggested for fibromyalgia and CFS: Acetyl L-Carnitine, Coenzyme Q10, and [Corvalen D-Ribose](#). Dr. Teitelbaum shared with us the results of a study on [D-Ribose](#) that is not published yet. This study shows that patients were seeing their energy increase by 61%, and their pain decrease 16% after using [D-Ribose](#)! I don't know about you, but I could use 61% more energy for sure!

Exercise as Able

Dr. Teitelbaum acknowledged that this is a tough topic for both fibromyalgia and CFS patients. We hear all the time that we should exercise, but then we try it and end up in a flare that is worse than where we started.

Here's how Dr. Teitelbaum suggested we try exercising: get a pedometer and just wear it every day. See how many steps you do in a day and very slowly increase to 10,000 steps

per day by adding just a few steps a day. This was something that I did back when I was starting to get well. When I first started off, I was only around 1,500 steps in one day. Slowly, I was able to build up to more.

The pedometer that I used was the [Omron HJ-720ITC Pocket Pedometer with Advanced Omron Health Management Software](#). Scott got it for me for my birthday. There were a couple of particularly cool features which were helpful in some unexpected ways.



- I could stick the pedometer in my pocket. It didn't have to be worn on my hip like some require that you do.
- It came with a belt clip so that I could wear it on my belt or waistband if I didn't have a pocket to stick it in.
- It resets every day so that I don't end up with one long day that was really a week. (With fibro brain, who needs one more thing to remember, right?)
- It keeps a week of memory that you can see on the pedometer. I was always comparing myself with myself by looking at previous days.
- It stores 41 days that you can download to your computer. That gave me plenty of time to remember to download it — even with fibro brain!
- It has [really cool software!](#)

The software was the unexpectedly awesome part. As the ex-customer service manager of a software company, sure, I wanted the cool software! But the thing that surprised me was that *it actually helped me manage my fibromyalgia!*

When I downloaded all of my steps to the computer, I could [see an unbiased record of my activity](#). As I said above, I started off walking around 1,500 steps in a day. I found that if I hit 2,000 steps I would be tired the next day, but if I rested I would be okay. If I didn't rest and did another 2,000 steps, I would be in for a major flare. In addition, I found that if I did 2,500 steps in one day or, say, 3,000 steps, look out! I'd be hurtin' real bad for a few days.

Watching these numbers really helped me learn my rhythm. I also learned how much activity things like a trip to Costco really meant (1,000 steps or so) and how to budget for that. This is what led me to set up my calendaring rhythm of only one appointment a week, like I discussed in my post, [Honoring Your Body: Practical Advice, Part 1](#).

Would getting a clear picture of some of these things about yourself help you? Or is a simple pedometer more your style? Go take a look at the [Omron Pocket Pedometer with Advanced Omron Health Management Software on Amazon](#) and come back & let me know what you think!

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