Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME), also known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) or ME/CFS, is a chronic, complex, multi-systemic disease that profoundly limits the health and productivity of patients with symptoms that can include: extreme exhaustion without an attributable cause (exacerbated by activity), severe headache and debilitating pain, diminished ability to concentrate and process information, extreme sensitivity to light and sound, cognitive impairment, neurological abnormalities, and complete organ system shutdown.

As many as 2.5 million Americans and nearly 20 million people worldwide are estimated to suffer from ME/CFS. About 80% of reported ME/CFS cases follow an acute infection, particularly viral infections. There is no known cure for ME/CFS nor are there any FDA-approved drugs or treatments.

In July 2020, an article was published by Lily Chui, Lynn R Fuentes, Olena M Marshall, and Arthur A Mirini designed to educate occupational therapists about how they could help university students with ME/CFS. Recommendations from the article include:

- Awareness of the fluctuating nature of ME/CFS
  - Be aware of the waxing and waning nature of ME/CFS and its unpredictability

- Negotiation of accommodations in advance
  - Ensure that affected students are aware of the need to register with the disability office as early as possible
  - Advise student to schedule an appointment with an academic advisor/consultant early in their university years
  - Encourage students to communicate with instructors prior to beginning a class
  - Encourage students to request assignment flexibility when possible, emphasizing mastery over quantity of work

- Help students minimize travel
  - Support for participation from off-campus sites
  - Provision of teleconference capabilities
  - Online courses and/or placement of class materials online
  - Housing close to campus
  - Dorm rooms that are private, handicap-accessible, and/or close to shared amenities
  - Handicapped parking permits
  - Transportation to and between classes

- Encourage lecture notes and/or recordings when lectures are not online or otherwise available for review
  - If no recordings are available, allow students to record lectures on their own
- Allow examination accommodations, especially when requested ahead of time.
  - Additional time
  - Scheduled and/or spontaneous rest breaks
  - Allowance of food and drink (provided by the student) as needed to effectively manage their condition
  - Alternative testing modalities (e.g., online, oral)
  - Scheduling exams so that students can take advantage of their higher energy times
  - Spacing out examinations (e.g., allowing two two-hour final tests to be taken on separate days rather than the same day)
  - A quiet place to take exams (e.g., disability office) or the use of earplugs or noise cancelling headphones

- Permit flexible scheduling when possible and the ability to miss or leave classes without penalty when medically necessary

- Organize easily accessible rest areas on campus and include the right to take opportunities for rest where and when needed

- Furnish ergonomic furniture and devices, such as desks, chairs, computers, keyboards, computer mice

- Incorporate as much flexibility as allowable for students who have a work assignment, such as a teaching assistantship, or another type of work-like experience such as an experimental learning course requirement. Examples of accommodations include:
  - Teaching remotely
  - Scheduling class at a convenient time
  - Facilitating remote office hours

- Facilitate the use of wheelchairs, mobility aids, and other power-driven mobility devices (OPDMDs), as provided for in the Americans for Disabilities Act, where legal and consistent with applicable university policies

- Universities should inform students and their families about these accommodation options and how to access them

---

1 Chu, Lily et al. 'Environmental Accommodations for University Students Affected by Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)'. 1 Jan. 2020 : 315 – 326.