

Medically Unexplained Physical Symptoms: MUPS

If you are reading this, it's most likely because a doctor has told you that he/she cannot explain one or more of your symptoms. **Don't despair!**

It's difficult to have an undiagnosed illness:

- It's troubling not to know what's wrong with you.
- It's frustrating not to have something to "take" to get better.
- It's embarrassing that other people can't see what's wrong with you.
- It can make you angry that some people seem to treat you like you are crazy or that you are making your symptoms up.

This pamphlet is designed to help you with these and other issues.

It will probably surprise you to learn that having medically unexplained physical symptoms is not that uncommon. Studies show that doctors can find no specific cause for about one-third of their patient's symptoms. Most patients don't realize this because they seek medical help when they are acutely sick (like with infections), and these are the kind of illnesses that doctors are best at treating.

You may also be reading this because you have been sick for quite awhile, have been to a number of doctors, and you and your family may be scared or frustrated because the doctors don't seem to know what's wrong with you. In many ways, this seems like bad news. However, doctors are very good at detecting life-threatening diseases and those with a rapid downhill course.

Almost always, life-threatening diseases show themselves after a careful history, exam, and testing. So, while the news of unexplained symptoms is unwelcome, a "normal work-up" at least tells you that you are very unlikely to have a life-threatening disease.

This information may not help a lot when you are ill and don't know what's wrong. You are suffering, and it may seem like no one wants to help. But helpful approaches are available for people with medically unexplained physical symptoms (such as fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and chronic pain). The suggestions in the pamphlet are based on these approaches.

It is important to stay hopeful! There is much that others can do to help you, and several things you can learn to do on your own. Please read through all the sections of this pamphlet that apply to you or your family member. Not every strategy helps every person (even the best medicine isn't perfect), so pick and choose ones that seem best for you. None of them are an easy cure, but each strategy can play a small role as you struggle to get your life back. For further information or encouragement, please talk to your Primary Care Provider or contact the Deployment Health Clinical Center at 866-559-1627 (toll free).