

SCREENING FOR PEM/PESE

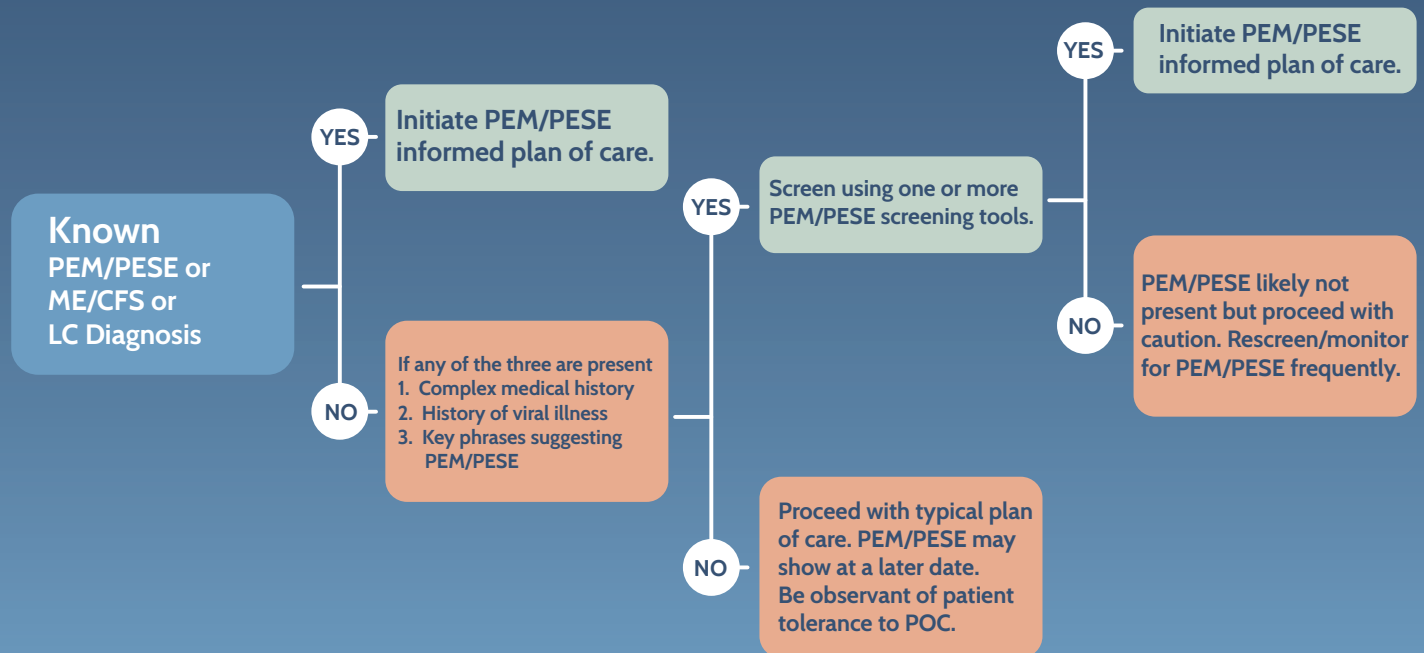
Is your patient not responding to traditional therapy approaches?
Do they express an inability to do the things they once tolerated?
Do they no longer tolerate exercise?

Taking a thorough subjective history and asking these questions can help you to identify patients who experience post-exertional malaise or exertion intolerance. There are evidence-based questionnaires that can aid you in this process.

SCREENING TO IDENTIFY PEM/PESE

Even if your patient presents with a fatiguing disease (cancer, cardiovascular, COPD, depression, etc.), you still need to screen for PEM/PESE. Screening is quick and can help you effectively treat your patient.

Clinical Screening Decision Tree for ME/CFS and LC



During evaluations and treatments, it is imperative to avoid triggering PEM/PESE. Check in with the patient often and allow them to guide the intensity/duration of the visit.

SCREENING FOR PEM/PESE

PEM/PESE known or ME/CFS or LC diagnosed: patient may not yet understand PEM/PESE.

- Review past medical history (PMH) and prepare BRIEF clarifying questions regarding PEM/PESE triggers: what task and duration triggers, what symptoms manifest, what is the recovery time?

PEM/PESE unidentified: look and listen for

- Complex PMH- orthostatic intolerance, fibromyalgia, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, migraine, mast cell activation syndrome (MCAS), chronic pain, GI issues
- History of viral/bacterial infections - EBV (Mono), LCM, Ebola, SARS, DENV, tick-borne disease, etc.

Patient reports:

- I never recovered after the flu
- Activity makes me worse
- After a week of work/school I need the weekend to recover
- Sleep doesn't make me better/sleep is non restoring
- Exercise level has plateaued or worsened/feel sick after exercise
- Can't tolerate activity anymore
- Feel like I "crash" after doing _____
- Limbs feel like cement
- Always feel exhausted

SCREENING TOOLS FOR PEM/PESE

US ME/CFS Clinician Coalition:

- What happens when you engage in normal (previously tolerated) physical/cognitive exertion/activity?
- How much activity does it take to make you feel ill or trigger illness worsening?
- How long does it take to recover from physical/cognitive effort?
- Do you avoid or change certain activities because of what happens after you do them?

Workwell Foundation (PDF):

- Do you experience severe fatigue with at least 3 symptoms in the categories below
 - Feel unwell
 - Feel weak
 - Don't sleep well
 - Have pain
 - Does it take a day or more to recover from exertion?

SCREENING FOR PEM/PESE

DePaul Symptom Questionnaire PEM Short Form (PDF)

Symptom	Frequency Throughout the past 6 months, how often have you had this symptom? For each symptom listed below, circle a number from: 0 = none of the time 1 = a little of the time 2 = about half the time 3 = most of the time 4 = all of the time	Severity Throughout the past 6 months, how much has this symptom bothered you? For each symptom listed below, circle a number from: 0 = symptom not present 1 = mild 2 = moderate 3 = severe 4 = very severe
1. Dead, heavy feeling after starting to exercise	0 1 2 3 4	0 1 2 3 4
2. Next day soreness or fatigue after non- strenuous, everyday activities	0 1 2 3 4	0 1 2 3 4
3. Mentally tired after the slightest effort	0 1 2 3 4	0 1 2 3 4
4. Minimum exercise makes you physically tired	0 1 2 3 4	0 1 2 3 4
5. Physically drained or sick after mild activity	0 1 2 3 4	0 1 2 3 4

DSQ-PEM Scoring

Scoring Step 1

- Items 1–5: A frequency and severity score of 2, 2 on any.
- Items 1–5 is indicative of PEM.

Symptom	Circle One
6. If you were to become exhausted after actively participating in extracurricular activities, sports, or outings with friends, would you recover within an hour or two after the activity ended?	YES NO
7. Do you experience a worsening of your fatigue/energy related illness after engaging in minimal physical effort?	YES NO
8. Do you experience a worsening of your fatigue/energy related illness after engaging in mental effort?	YES NO
9. If you feel worse after activities, how long does this last?	<1hr 2-3hrs 4-10hrs 11-13hrs 14-23hrs >24hrs
10. If you do not exercise, is it because exercise makes your symptoms worse?	YES NO

Scoring Step 2

- Items 7,8: Either item 7 or 8 must have an answer of yes to indicate an ME and/or CFS dx.
- Item 9: A response of >14 h is needed to indicate an ME and/or CFS dx.
- Items 6,10: Neither item indicates an ME and/or CFS diagnosis, but provides a description of patient PEM for clinical evaluations.

Jason, Leonard. (2018). DePaul Symptom Questionnaire - Post-Exertional Malaise short form (DSQ-PEM)

Co-authored by professional ME/CFS rehabilitation clinicians.