

Case Study No8

Tansy Edgerton ME

Tansy Edgerton, a 36-year-old psychotherapist from Horncastle in Lincolnshire, has spent the past four years off work with M.E, the debilitating illness which causes chronic fatigue. But taking a food intolerance test from Cambridge Nutritional Sciences last year marked the start of a recovery which should see her back on the job market this summer.

Tansy Edgerton's life had been put on hold for four years before she took the Food Detective™ food intolerance test from Cambridge Nutritional Sciences last year.

Unable to work, Tansy has been struggling with the debilitating disease of the nervous system, M.E since October 2003, when initially she began to feel exhausted for no good reason and then developed flu-like symptoms two weeks later. The illness continued almost continuously for the next three years.

At her worst, Tansy would be bedridden for up to ten days a month – and she would have to contend with “brain fogs”, fatigue, muscle pain, and a racing pulse. “It was like having a continuous terrible hangover or a bad bout of flu and I really couldn't see any way out.”

In desperation, Tansy decided to experiment with her diet after a friend advised her to try excluding certain foods. “I'd always assumed when I felt particularly bad that I had overdone it physically, but somebody suggested that I should try taking nuts and eggs out of my diet. I did feel slightly better after doing this and the process got me thinking,” she says.

Next she tried excluding wheat and replacing it with rye – a move which made her feel worse. But as well as being ineffective, the procedure of trying to find out every possible food intolerance by trial and error was time consuming and an almost impossible feat, decided Tansy. That is when she opted to take the Food Detective™ test from Cambridge Nutritional Sciences.

In around a week Tansy had the results of the test. This showed that she was reacting to no fewer than 20 foods, including wheat, dairy, soya, nuts, egg white, rye, barley and crab. Ironically, she reacted more to rye than wheat, the ingredient she had replaced wheat with before taking the test.

Tansy set about trying to take these offending foods out of her diet and within the first week began to feel slightly better. “As I became more and more strict with it, I saw the benefits and there was a greater improvement. There was a clearing of the fog, I had more energy and the overall feeling of being seriously unwell increasingly reduced,” she says.

Feeling better gave Tansy the impetus to explore how else she might go about speeding up her recovery. Her investigations led her to a Dr Sarah Myhill, whose work is prominent in fatigue related illness, and who showed Tansy how other parts of her lifestyle were impacting her. A blood test discovered that Tansy had a high level of insecticide in her body – undoubtedly caused by the pest control treatments she had been using

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on her menagerie of animals over the past 20 years. The blood test also showed that she was reacting to mould spores in her partner's home and gas fumes from her cooker.

"I would say that 50% of the cause of my illness came from the food sensitivity. But the intolerance test gave me the impetus which enabled me to explore other possible sources," says Tansy.

Armed with so much more information about how she could help her body recover from M.E., Tansy says she is now in the rehabilitation stage of her illness. She is back to walking her dogs, beginning to ride her two horses and she does not have to take to her bed at all. "Now I am well on the way to being totally cured, I am recovering, and just have to work on overcoming the muscle de-conditioning caused by years of almost no activity," she says.

"The food intolerance test was the first part of the jigsaw puzzle for me, it allowed me to start piecing together exactly what was causing my illness," she says. "It gave me a good starting point from which to work from, and a belief that I really could get better," she says.

Tansy's partner, 44-year-old Rob Torkington, has been ill for the past 10 years also with ME, and had to take a year off work because of a severe relapse in 2006. He took the food intolerance test at the same time as Tansy, in May 2007, and has since returned to his career in electrical engineering after adapting his diet and lifestyle. He was also treated by Dr Myhill and had three months of antibiotics to treat an underling infection. Tansy says that as in her case, taking the intolerance food test played a 50% part in helping to get him back to work full-time.

"Before, he just came home from work and collapsed in bed exhausted. Now he wants to go riding or take the dogs around the woods. It's really good... amazing in fact!" says Tansy. "I can always tell when he has cheated on his exclusion diet, because he starts sneezing, or just looks droopy and sick again."

The couple are now excited about their future. "In our darkest moments, I think we were both aware that we might never be able to do the things we loved again. Now I have to keep pinching myself. When I am fully recovered we hope to go on a week's trek across Bulgaria on horseback... stunning!", says Tansy.

"The medical profession had told us over and over again that this illness is incurable and that we just had to learn to live with it. But I refused to accept that and refused to face the possibility that I may be ill for the rest of my life," she adds.

