

ORGANIZATION NEWS

Information/Education Page

Energy Conservation Techniques to Decrease Fatigue



Purpose

- To educate patients and their caregivers about fatigue and energy conservation techniques.
- To provide general recommendations for energy conservation when dealing with fatigue.
- To provide general and disease-specific resources for individuals affected by fatigue.

What is fatigue?

- Fatigue is a constant feeling of exhaustion that can lead to less energy to perform physical and mental work.^{1(p.182)}
 - Fatigue is an individualized experience that affects each person differently.
 - There are many causes of fatigue. Some are more serious than others.
 - Fatigue may be related to physical health, mental health, weight, nutrition, medications, sleep habits, or a specific medical condition.
- Your health care provider can help determine the difference between fatigue and sleepiness.²
 - Your health care provider may recommend tests to help identify possible medical causes of your fatigue. Conditions related to fatigue include anemia, electrolyte imbalance, thyroid problems, liver disease, human immunodeficiency virus, hepatitis C, diabetes, sleep apnea, sleep disorders, obesity, heart disease, cancer, chronic infection, and renal disease.²⁻⁴ Psychiatric conditions—such as depression, anxiety and panic, or eating disorders—can also cause fatigue.⁵
 - You may experience fatigue after surgery or medical treatments like chemotherapy or radiation.

- Rest and sleep help to reduce short-term fatigue.
- Unrelenting exhaustion is more intense and lasts longer. Rest does not relieve it.
 - It decreases energy, motivation, and concentration.
 - It may affect emotional and psychosocial well-being.⁶
 - People with unrelenting exhaustion may be tested for chronic fatigue syndrome.
 - Information on when to see a physician about continuous fatigue can be found at many medical information websites (several reliable sites are included in the resource section at the end of this document).
- Many health care providers can help you manage your fatigue.
 - Talk to your primary care provider about your fatigue and discuss what treatment options are best for you.
 - Your primary care provider can make appropriate referrals and an individualized plan of care to address your fatigue concerns.⁵
 - Health care providers who can offer specialized treatment for fatigue, include: physicians, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, nurses, and dieticians.

What is energy conservation?

- Energy conservation involves changing an activity or the environment to decrease the level of energy required to complete a task.
- The goal is to improve a person's ability to manage his/her fatigue throughout an entire day.

 General Recommendations for Energy Conservation

Delegate tasks	Ask for help with tiring activities. Tell family or friends if you need help with tasks that are difficult for you. Some people benefit from a home health aide to assist them. Ask your physician for more information if you think you could benefit from a home health aide.
Organization	Being organized can help lower the amount of effort needed to do common tasks. Some examples at home include storing frequently used kitchen items on the counter to avoid lifting or reaching. Keep common household items such as paper towels and cleaning supplies on both floors if you live in a 2-story home. ⁷ This can prevent unnecessary trips between floors.
Time management	Use a planner or smartphone to organize appointments. This can help make sure that multiple energy-consuming events are not happening too close together.
Simplifying tasks	Break down time-consuming activities into smaller steps. For example, instead of cleaning your entire home at once, clean it in sections over a few days. Use electric or automatic appliances when possible, such as a dishwasher, electric mixer, or food processor. ⁷
Taking a seat	Standing requires more energy than sitting. Sit down during activities such as dressing, bathing, cooking, folding laundry, and ironing. Consider using a stool or small bench for outdoor work.
Climate	Extreme temperatures can place unnecessary energy demand on the body. Avoid doing activities in temperatures below 20°F or higher than 80°F with humidity. If you live in a very warm location, perform difficult tasks in the early morning or in the evening to avoid peak midday temperatures. ⁷
Proper body mechanics Ergonomics	Use good standing and sitting posture throughout the day. Use your leg muscles when lifting. Do not use your back muscles. Bend at the hips and knees to avoid injury. Avoid twisting your back. Ergonomics is the science of adapting job equipment and techniques to prevent stress and injury, including fatigue. During work-related activities, follow recommendations made by the United States Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). A resource on ergonomics on the OSHA website is available at: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/ .
Sleep	A good night's sleep helps maximize energy levels. Adults are recommended to have 7-9 hours of sleep per night. ⁸ For more restful sleep, limit naps during the daytime. Avoid caffeine close to bedtime. Increase exercise during the day. ⁹
Medical equipment	Some people benefit from use of mobility equipment. Scooters, power wheelchairs, rolling walkers, and orthotics can help decrease the amount of energy used when walking. ¹ Ask your physician if any equipment would be appropriate for you.
Optimize community access	These are strategies to use when out in the community. Park close to store entrances to decrease walking distance. Use a rolling cart or scooter instead of carrying a basket. Avoid shopping at busy times. Identify a place to take a rest break if needed.
Disability parking tag	Talk to your doctor to determine if a disability parking tag is a good option for you. This allows you to use the designated parking spots closer to the entrance and save some of your energy for the tasks you need to do once inside.

- With proper use, an individual can decrease their overall level of fatigue while still being able to perform daily tasks and routines at home, at work, and in community.¹

Additional resources on fatigue

- Peters BR. What if it is not your sleep? Exploring other causes of daytime fatigue. Available at: [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/stanford-center-for-sleep-sciences-and-medicine/what-if-it-is-not-your-sl_b_10709490.html)
- Cleveland Clinic Wellness Team. Always tired? 7 hidden causes for your fatigue. Available at: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/always-tired-7-hidden-causes-for-your-fatigue/>.
- When to see a doctor. Available at: <https://www.mayoclinic.org/symptoms/fatigue/basics/when-to-see-doctor/sym-20050894>.

Additional Resources for Specific Medical Conditions	
Cancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of California San Francisco. Tips for conserving your energy. Available at: https://www.ucsfhealth.org/education/tips_for_conserving_your_energy/index.html. • American Cancer Society. Fatigue. Available at: https://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/staying-active/nutrition/nutrition-during-treatment/fatigue.html.
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Lung Association. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Available at: http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/copd/.
Multiple sclerosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Manage fatigue. Available at: https://www.nationalmssociety.org/Resources-Support/Library-Education-Programs/You-CAN/Manage-Fatigue.
Parkinson disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parkinson's Foundation. Fatigue. Available at: http://parkinson.org/Understanding-Parkinsons/Symptoms/Non-Movement-Symptoms/Fatigue.
Stroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Heart Association/American Stroke Association. Fighting through fatigue after stroke Available at: http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/LifeAfterStroke/RegainingIndependence/PhysicalChallenges/Fatigue-After-Stroke_UCM_467435_Article.jsp#.WgtT1o-cEdV.
Arthritis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arthritis Foundation. How to beat arthritis fatigue. Available at: http://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/pain-management/fatigue/beat-fatigue.php.
Chronic fatigue syndrome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome. Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/me-cfs/index.html. • Mayo Clinic. Chronic fatigue syndrome. Available at: https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/chronic-fatigue-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20360490.

- National Institute on Aging. Fatigue in older adults. Available at: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/fatigue-older-adults>.

Authorship

This page was developed by Archana Vatwani, PT, DPT, MBA, CLWT, CDP (*e-mail address: avatwani@nova.edu*), and Rania Margonis, PT, DPT.

Disclaimer

This information is not meant to replace the advice from a medical professional and should not be used during any medical emergencies. The information

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