

Managing fatigue.

Life can be fulfilling, dynamic and challenging, but it can also be exhausting. Fatigue is very common and is driven by life events, work commitments and your overall wellbeing.



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Fatigue is the state of feeling very tired, weary or sleepy as a result of insufficient sleep, prolonged mental or physical work, or extended periods of stress or anxiety. It can be a symptom of illness such as diabetes or glandular fever, or an actual illness such as chronic fatigue symptom.

An individual's performance can be affected and errors may be more likely in tasks that require concentration, decision making, awareness, fast reactions and memory. Boring or repetitive tasks can intensify feelings of fatigue.

Signs and symptoms of fatigue.

- Tiredness
- Sleepiness, including falling asleep against your will ('micro' sleeps)
- Irritability
- Depression
- Loss of appetite
- Digestive problems
- Increased susceptibility to illness

Tips to help you fight fatigue.

Schedule breaks into your day. Use your breaks well and try to switch off. Plan your work into shorter bursts followed by a short break rather than marathon long sessions. Use the evenings, weekends and commuting time to unwind and relax if you can.

Eat within 1 hour of waking. The body needs to have carbohydrates (glycogen) within one hour of waking to fuel the brain (your brain is fuelled by oxygen and glycogen). The longer you leave eating, the less fuel the brain has.

Keep re-fuelling. Eat some carbohydrates every 2-3 hours. Don't skip meals. Keep snacks to less than 100 calories (a handful of nuts, not a 500g bag!). Don't overeat as this is a big cause of sluggishness. Keep portion sizes small and eat regularly.

Drink more water. Water is essential for the transportation of energy and nutrition around the body. Carry a water bottle with you daily and keep refilling it. 6-8 glasses a day is recommended.

Move more. The body was designed to be in motion and keep our circulation active. The brain requires lots of fresh oxygen to fuel it. You therefore need to move more and sit less to increase energy levels. Even the slightest movement will increase blood circulation, bringing oxygen and vital nutrients to the body and mind. Every 90 minutes you should move your major muscles. Aim to include activity into your day and try to achieve 30 minute plus per day.

Manage stress. Take action on issues that are within your control. You can reduce stress by getting to the source of it. List your sources of pressure and manage the ones you can control. Look for activities that eat up your time but deliver little value. Schedule less time for such activities or eliminate them completely.

Breathe to relax. Making a conscious effort to deepen and slow down your breathing can help you relax and recuperate your energy levels.

Sleep well. One obvious source of exhaustion is a lack of sleep or disruptive sleep patterns. We have all experienced it. You wake up in the night and worry about work, relationships, commitments, debt and so on. Sleep deprivation (at its most extreme) can have a devastating effect on your body and mind. Try to get a good night's sleep and see your GP if you snore or find yourself inadvertently falling asleep – especially if you operate machinery or drive. Eating too late, especially with a diet that is very rich and accompanied by too many fluids, may also disrupt sleep.

Consider the effects of prescription or non-prescription medications as they can make you drowsy. Talk to your pharmacist or doctor if you are unsure.



At any given time, one in five people feels unusually tired, and one in 10 have prolonged fatigue (Royal College of Psychiatrists)