Fatigue management Pack

Name: ………………………………

**What is fatigue?**

**Fatigue can be described as the lack of energy and motivation (both physical and mental).**

Tired

Listless

Terms people use for fatigue

Worn out

Lack of Energy

Weary lethargic

Exhausted Run down

Malaise

This is different than drowsiness, a term that describes the need to [sleep](https://www.medicinenet.com/sleep/article.htm). Often a person complains of feeling tired and it is up to the health care professional to distinguish between fatigue and drowsiness, though both can occur at the same time.

Fatigue can be a normal response to physical and mental activity; in most individuals it is quickly relieved (usually in hours to about a day, depending on the intensity of the activity) by reducing the activity

Fatigue is a very common complaint and it is important to remember that it is a symptom and not a disease. Many illnesses can result in the complaint of fatigue and they can be physical, psychological, or a combination of the two.

Often, the symptom of fatigue has a gradual onset and the person may not be aware of how much energy they have lost until they try to compare their ability to complete tasks from one time frame to another.

Individuals with fatigue may have three primary complaints;

however, it can vary in each person.

1. There may be lack of motivation or the ability to begin an activity;
2. the person tires easily once the activity has begun; and
3. the person has mental fatigue or difficulty with concentration and memory to start or complete an activit

**Monitoring Fatigue Chart**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Day/Time | Wake | Morning | Lunchtime | Afternoon | Evening |
| **Monday** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Tuesday** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Wednesday** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Thursday** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Friday** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Saturday** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sunday** |  |  |  |  |  |

Please enter a number between 1 and 4 per box

1 = No fatigue

2 = Some fatigue

3 = Fatigued

4 = Very fatigued

Energy balance



We all have a pot of energy available to us on a daily basis and we can choose to spend that energy mentally, physically, emotionally or immunologically. When that pot of energy is empty, we have no more to spare. The brain stops us from doing more by making us feel fatigued. Of course, it is normal to feel tired at the end of the day and a night’s rest together with good food restores the energy pot for the next day.

The symptom of fatigue is a very important one – it prevents us spending too much energy in a day. If we didn’t experience fatigue, we would simply go on doing things without rest or nourishment, rapidly get into a situation that was unsustainable, and die. So, for example, a person who has a normal energy pot may develop ‘flu and all his energy goes into the immunological department so he has no energy left for mental, physical or emotional work. That person becomes bed bound for a few days until he gets rid of his ‘flu virus and recovers.

**Prioritising tasks**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Jobs that can be ‘dumped’ | Jobs you can delay | Jobs that can be delegated | Jobs that must be done |
|  |  |  |  |

**Coping strategies**

1. Use your energy wisely
2. Schedule rest and sleep
3. Gentle exercise
4. Stay hydrated and eat healthily
5. Manage your thoughts and feelings

**Use your energy wisely**

Activity Analysis and modification

This is a process when you take an activity you want/need to do and break it down into steps. Then you look at each step to see if there is a different way to do it. You can look at whether there is any equipment or technology that could assist with the task.

**Washing**

**Eliminate change sequence or combine steps**

* Use 2-in-1 shampoo and conditioner
* Wash your hair every other day

**Reduce Physical effort/mental energy**

* Allowing someone to help you wash
* Sit down to wash (ask about bathing/showering aids)
* Sit down to dry yourself

**Use new tools and technology**

* Use bathing aids to shower/bath
* Use perching stool to wash at sink, dry yourself, do your teeth
* Use long handled sponges/brushes to wash, to prevent bending down.

**Rearrange activity station**

* Fit a hook or rail near shower for your towel so you don’t need to bend down.

**Energy conservation**

Tick the ones you are likely to try

Personal care

* Sit to wash or shower
* Use warm not hot water
* Use long handled sponges or brushes to minimise bending
* Use a non-slip shower/bath mat
* Sit to dry yourself
* Wear a towelling dressing gown to help the drying process
* Use an electric toothbrush
* Use a raised toilet seat or other aids

Dressing

* Lay out clothes before starting
* Loose fitting clothes allow you to breath more easily
* Wear clothing with large fastenings at the front, rather than having to pull clothes over your head.
* Use a helping hand to reduce bending
* Bring your foot up to put on socks/shoes rather than bending.

Food preparation

* Keep most frequently used items out on the worktop
* Sit to prepare food, possibly use a perching stool
* Use utensils with easy grip handles
* Use convenience food eg. Vegetables already chopped
* Avoid lifting heavy pans. Eg. Use a cooking basket
* Rest elbows on table or work top
* If you have a freezer, make enough for more than one meal.

**Exercise**

Preserving muscular strength, balance, and functional status mood

It’s possible to do too much exercise, so balance the exercise with rest, and keep cool while you exercise, especially if heat makes your fatigue worse.

You might want to plan your exercise and avoid long sessions to prevent overheating. Some people find water-based exercise helpful for maintaining a steady temperature

**To be active:**

* Choose an activity you like, that suits your age, health and fitness level
* Start slowly. Begin with light exercise such as a short walk, gentle yoga or stretching. Try to walk to the end of your driveway or up and down your hallway to get started – even short walks will help
* Go at your own pace. Gradually build up to 30 minutes of activity.
* Stop and rest if an activity makes you feel sore, stiff or out of breath.

Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week (remember you can split this 30 minutes into sessions of 5 or 10 minutes)

**Nutrition**

Our bodies get energy from the food we eat. Fatigue can occur if the body doesn’t get enough food or if there are changes to the way the body is able to use the food. In cancer, this can happen because:

* you can’t eat the same amount of food as you normally would
* your body needs more energy than it did before
* your body may not be able to absorb and use all the nutrients from the food.

Sometimes people may lose weight, regardless of the amount they eat, because of the effect of the cancer on the body.

If you feel sick (nausea), you may not get enough energy from food because its likely that you are eating less. If you actually are sick (vomit), your body doesn’t absorb the food and essential nutrients it needs. This can make you feel weak and tired, and you may also become dehydrated.

It can help to get someone else to prepare food for you.

Otherwise, you may find that you use all your energy to cook and then feel too tired to eat. You could also buy some ready made meals or place an order with an organisation that delivers ready made meals to your home.

You could try having small amounts of food or snacks often rather than a big meal. If you don’t feel like eating, you could try ready-made, high calorie drinks. These are available from any chemist.

**Stay Hydrated**

Water and other fluids are important to prevent dehydration (your body having enough water or fluids to help regulate its temperature and maintain other bodily functions).

**Sleep/ relaxation**

Regular, good quality sleep is important when you are feeling tired.

Keeping to your normal sleeping pattern, even if you want to sleep all the time, can help. There are different things you can do to improve your sleep and rest. You might want to try:

* keeping a bedtime routine
* reducing light and noise in your bedroom
* keeping a worry diary to record any thoughts that stop you sleeping
* getting some exercise – this may help you to sleep better in the long term.

If you struggle to get to sleep, there are things you can do to help.

\*It’s a good idea to have a small snack or a warm drink before bed. But try not to drink stimulating drinks, such as coffee, close to bedtime as this can keep you awake.

\*You might also want to try mental exercises if you can’t get to sleep. For example, try to remember the lines of a song, make alphabetical lists or write a letter in your mind.

\*If you still havn’t fallen asleep after 20-30 minutes get up and go to another room….go back to bed when you feel sleepy.

**Incorporating relaxation into your routine**

Make a list of things that you are currently able to do that you enjoy or help you feel relaxed.

Add any activities that you think you could manage but have not been doing for other reasons

Think about how you could incorporate these within your current routine.

**Managing your thoughts and feelings**

In any illness the way we *think* about our symptoms and the impact they have can affect how we feel about them and how we manage them.

For example if a person with diabetes thinks “there is nothing I can do to control my illness” they may not do things that are helpful for this condition e.g. monitoring their blood sugar, taking insulin or exercising.

Your thoughts and feelings influence how you feel physically, and in turn what you do….

Changes in how your body feels

Physical

Behaviour

Thoughts

Changes in what you do

Changes in how you think

**Barriers to managing fatigue**

Cancer related fatigue can affect your emotions, personal and intimate relationships, how you spend your time and other parts of your life.