

How to Manage **Fatigue** at Home

This guide will help you understand:

What is fatigue?

What causes fatigue?

What you can do to help manage your fatigue.

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

One:carepath gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the many patients, caregivers and providers that were involved in preparing this Symptom Self-Management Guide.

What is fatigue?

Fatigue is a common symptom when you live with a chronic condition. It is different than tiredness. When you have fatigue, no matter how much rest or sleep you get, you still have no energy.

Fatigue can make you feel:

- Very tired, heavy or slow;
- Worn out;
- Like you can't remember things; and/or
- Like you don't have the energy to do the things you enjoy.



Tell your healthcare team if you have fatigue and are finding it difficult to manage.

What causes fatigue?

There are many reasons for feeling tired, for example, changes with sleep, stress or depression. Certain medical conditions and sometimes medications or treatments like chemotherapy can also cause it.

What you can do to help manage your fatigue.

Managing fatigue works best when you play an active role.

- Try to figure out if there is a cause for your fatigue.
- Is it better or worse at different times?
- What helps or makes it worse?
- You may want to use a symptom diary to record information about your fatigue. Tracking this information will help you talk to healthcare team about your fatigue.

Steps you can try to improve your energy:

- **Gentle exercise:** If it is safe for you, do gentle exercises like walking, swimming and riding a stationary bike every day.
- **Daily Stretching:** Stay flexible by stretching every day.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** Try and eat often and throughout the day.
- **Drink plenty of water:** Drink as much fluid as your healthcare team have told you to drink.
- **Get a good night's sleep:** Fatigue may be worse if you don't get enough sleep. Try not go to bed until you feel sleepy, and go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day.
- **Limit or stop:** Alcohol, caffeine and nicotine to see if your symptoms get better. These can make your fatigue worse.

Steps you can try to conserve your energy:

Daily Living

- Pace yourself. Break larger jobs into small jobs or save the harder jobs for when you have less fatigue.
- Try to determine when is the most energetic time in the day for you and schedule that time to do harder jobs. Are you a morning person or a night owl?
- Rest often. Place chairs around your home so you can stop and rest (for example, at the top and bottom of the stairs).
- Ask your Home Care provider about equipment in the house to make life easier such as a walker, cane, commode, urinal, etc.
- Sit down to bathe.
- Wear a terry bathrobe to dry off.
- Installing bars, not just in the bathroom, but any place where you might need to reach for extra support while moving around such as the kitchen, bedroom, laundry room.

Housekeeping

- Spread tasks over the week.
- Do housework sitting down if possible (for example, sit down to iron).
- Ask someone to help you with shopping and laundry.
- Drag or slide heavy items instead of lifting them.
- Keep a small trash can in each room.
- Some programs offer free or minimal charge light housekeeping. Ask your healthcare team about this. Veterans' Services offers this to members or their spouses for a nominal fee.

Shopping

- Plan ahead and organize your list by aisle.

- Use a grocery cart for support.
- Shop at less busy times.
- Ask for help bringing your groceries to the car.
- Order groceries online.

Preparing Meals

- Prepare meals sitting down.
- Soak dishes instead of scrubbing and let dishes air dry or use the dishwasher on a daily basis.
- Make double portions and freeze half.
- Keep items you use often near you and in easy reach (for example, keep a plate, cup and cutlery on the counter).
- Look for organizations that prepare and/or deliver pre-made meals e.g. meals on wheels

When you should talk to your healthcare team.

Speak with your healthcare team if fatigue is a problem for you. Your worries and questions are important to you and them. Your healthcare team may speak to you about the different medications you can take.

- Let them know if you think your medical condition or medications are the reason for your fatigue.
- Let your healthcare team know if a medication is working for you or if you're having side effects. You may have to try a few different ones to know what works best for you.
- Talk to them before taking over-the-counter medication, including vitamins and herbal remedies.

Your healthcare team may be able to help you:

- Apply for a disability parking placard so you won't have to walk as far when you go out.

- Apply for accessible transit services. These are available in some areas.
- Arrange for home bloodwork collections.

Tips on sharing your symptoms with your healthcare team:

Make some notes about your fatigue symptoms and tell your healthcare team about them.

- Has there been a change in your fatigue?
- What does your fatigue feel like? How bad is it?
- When does it happen and how long does it last?
- What makes it better or worse? What have you tried already?
- Make a list of all the medications you are taking including over the counter medications.

Notes: _____
