Fatigue
Fatigue

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Fatigue can cause a vast range of other physical, mental and emotional symptoms including:

- chronic tiredness or sleepiness
- headache
- dizziness
- sore or aching muscles
- muscle weakness
- slowed reflexes and responses
- impaired decision-making and judgement
- moodiness, such as irritability
- impaired hand-to-eye coordination
- appetite loss
- reduced immune system function
- blurry vision
- short-term memory problems
- poor concentration
- hallucinations
- reduced ability to pay attention to the situation at hand
- low motivation.

Causes of fatigue

The wide range of causes that can trigger fatigue include:

- Medical causes – unrelenting exhaustion may be a sign of an underlying illness, such as a thyroid disorder, heart disease or diabetes.
- Lifestyle-related causes – alcohol or drugs or lack of regular exercise can lead to feelings of fatigue.
- Workplace-related causes – workplace stress can lead to feelings of fatigue
- Emotional concerns and stress – fatigue is a common symptom of mental health problems, such as depression and grief, and may be accompanied by other signs and symptoms, including irritability and lack of motivation.

Fatigue can also be caused by a number of factors working in combination.

Medical causes of fatigue

There are a number of diseases and disorders which trigger fatigue. If you experience prolonged bouts of fatigue, consult your doctor.

Lifestyle-related causes of fatigue

Common lifestyle factors that can cause fatigue include:

- Lack of sleep – typically adults need about eight hours of sleep each night. Some people try to get by on fewer hours of sleep.
- Too much sleep – adults sleeping more than 11 hours per night can lead to excessive daytime sleepiness.
Fatigue

Fortunately, for most people fatigue will get better over time on its own or with some simple and practical lifestyle changes.

If necessary, your doctor might suggest certain medical tests if there is a reasonable chance the cause of your fatigue may be an undiagnosed medical issue (for example, anaemia or thyroid dysfunction).

If fatigue is having a negative effect on your quality of life, or causing you distress, then consider speaking with a health professional. By asking questions, they will help you work out why you are experiencing fatigue, and offer some suggestions on how to find relief.

If necessary, your doctor might suggest certain medical tests if there is a reasonable chance the cause of your fatigue may be an undiagnosed medical issue (for example, anaemia or thyroid dysfunction).

Fortunately, for most people fatigue will get better over time on its own or with some simple and practical lifestyle changes.

Where to get help

• Your doctor

Things to remember

• Fatigue can be caused by a number of factors working in combination, such as medical conditions, unhealthy lifestyle choices, workplace problems and stress.
• Most adults will experience fatigue at some point in their life.
• If you are getting enough sleep, good nutrition and exercising regularly but still find it hard to perform everyday activities, concentrate or be motivated, you may be experiencing fatigue.
• Always see your doctor for diagnosis if you are suffering from chronic tiredness.

References

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More information

Sleep

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Sleep basics
- Children and sleep
- Sleep related conditions
- Managing sleep problems

Sleep basics

- Mood and sleep
  Getting enough sleep is vital. Long term sleep deficiency can affect your mood. You can improve your sleep quality...
- Shiftwork
  A person working the night shift is at greater risk of various disorders and accidents...
- Sleep deprivation
  A fatigued person is accident prone and more likely to make mistakes and bad decisions...
- Sleep explained
  Fatigue is thought to cause about one in six road accidents - make sure you get enough sleep...

Children and sleep

- Dummies
  Dummy sucking should stop before school age to avoid teeth or mouth problems...
- Sleep and your baby
  Sleeping habits are learned, so try to set up a bedtime routine for your baby as soon as you can...
- Sleep - children and naps
  A child needs a daytime nap until they are around two and a half to three years of age...
- Sleep - children and nightmares
  Your child may have only a few scary dreams a year, or be troubled by nightmares much more often...
- Teenagers and sleep
  Sleep research suggests that teenagers need between eight and 10 hours of sleep every night...

Sleep related conditions

- Teeth grinding
  Teeth grinding (bruxism) is involuntary clenching or grinding of the teeth, usually during sleep...
- Snoring
  Snoring isn't harmful but may lead to long-term sleep deprivation...
- Sleep - common disorders
  Sleep disorders can prevent some people from getting enough sleep...
- Sleep - hypersomnia
  Hypersomnia means excessive sleepiness - it can have a number of different causes...

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• Sleep - narcolepsy
  A person with narcolepsy is extremely sleepy all the time and may fall asleep several times a day...

• Sleep - insomnia
  Around one in three people regularly have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep...

• Restless legs syndrome (RLS)
  Restless legs syndrome has been described as a type of cramp, soreness or a creeping, crawling feeling...

• Sleep apnoea
  A person with sleep apnoea may wake hundreds of times every night...

• Jet lag
  If you suffer badly from jet lag, it may be worthwhile considering a westerly travel route if possible...

Managing sleep problems

• Sleep hygiene
  You can retrain your body and mind so that you sleep well and wake feeling rested...

• Mood and sleep
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• Fatigue fighting tips
  Activity and nutrition help fight fatigue and put more energy into your daily life...

Related Information

• Sleep deprivation
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Related information on other websites

• NPS Medicinewise
• The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

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Page content currently being reviewed.

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Multilingual resources on coping with cancer fatigue

- Coping with cancer fatigue

Mindfulness

Some benefits of this relaxation technique include: improved focus and working memory; reduced stress, depression and anxiety; and improved immune function.

Mindfulness benefits and practice

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- **Sleep - hypersonnia**
  Hypersonnia means excessive sleepiness - it can have a number of different causes.

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- **Fatigue fighting tips**
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