

Fatigue

“Fatigue is the abnormal sense of tiredness or lack of energy out of proportion to the degree of daily effort or degree of disability.”

(Krupp *et al*, 1989)

Fatigue can be separated into ‘physical’ and ‘mental’ fatigue. You may notice that you have one type of fatigue more than the other, or it may be impossible to separate the two.

Causes

- Physical disease of, or injury to, the brain or nervous system. This can make it more effortful for the brain and body to carry out daily activities.
- Disrupted sleep
- Medication
- Excess physical or cognitive effort
- Inactivity
- Poor nutrition
- Stress and anxiety
- Low mood and depression
- Poor general level of fitness
- Environment
- Social isolation

Your Occupational Therapist can help you understand more about fatigue and how it might be limiting what you do.

Together we will aim to identify patterns and triggers relating to your individual experience of fatigue. We can then recommend appropriate management strategies.

This process requires commitment and being willing to trial different ways of approaching activity in order to better control your fatigue.

Your fatigue may also be impacting on those close to you, including family, friends and colleagues. We can support you to help others understand your fatigue and how you need to manage it.

Want more information?

- **Speak to your Occupational Therapist** about fatigue management strategies
- **Speak to your GP** regarding your medication
- **Speak to a psychologist or Talking Space Plus** if your mood is influencing your fatigue
www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/talkingspaceplus/

Useful websites

- www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness
- www.msociety.org.uk/about-ms/signs-and-symptoms/fatigue
- www.stroke.org.uk/effects-of-stroke/tiredness-and-fatigue
- www.headway.org.uk/about-brain-injury/individuals/effects-of-brain-injury/fatigue/

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

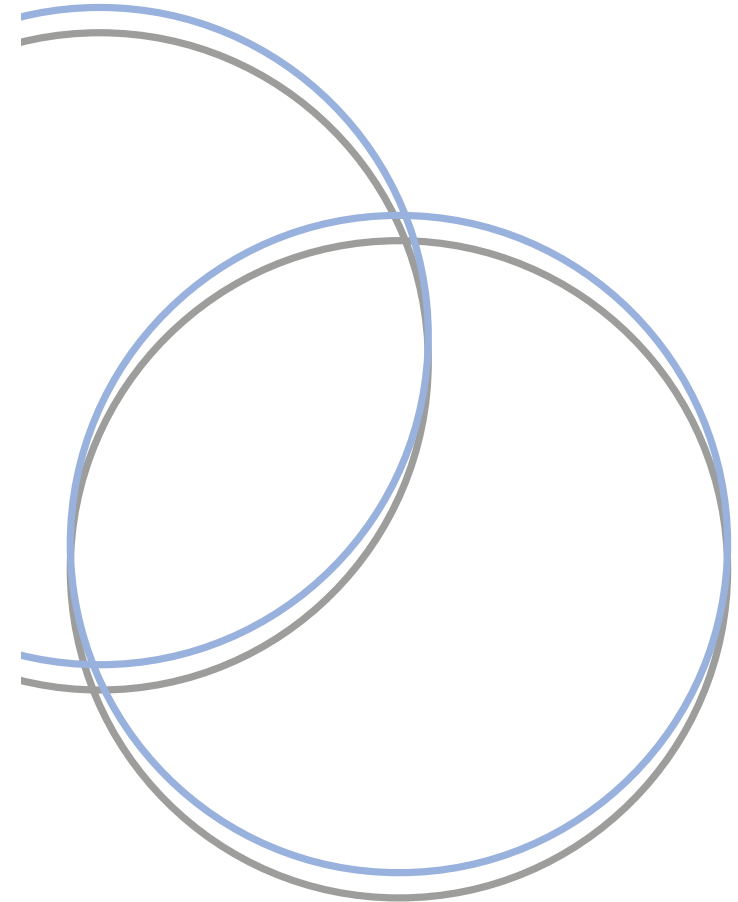
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Fatigue Management

Neurological Rehabilitation Service

Tel: 01865 737200

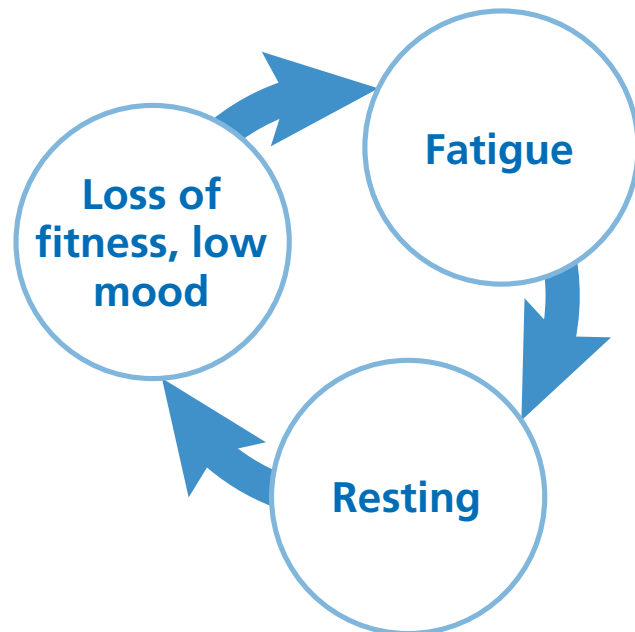


Oxford Centre for Enablement
Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7HE

Impact of fatigue

Fatigue tends to reduce activity levels; because you feel tired, you do less. This can influence your well-being in various ways.

- **Physical:** Excessive inactivity can cause muscle weakness and general de-conditioning. This can make it more challenging when you attempt to resume previous activity levels, and over time lead to a gradual decline in fitness.
- **Productivity:** You may feel you are achieving less, causing you to feel frustrated.
- **Social:** Fatigue is often associated with withdrawal from occasions which help us maintain social connections.
- **Mood:** All of the above can have detrimental psychological effects, such as depression, reduced self-confidence and increased anxiety.



Energy Conservation and the 3 P's

Learning more about fatigue and the strategies to manage it may be the first step towards assisting you to take a more active role in managing your fatigue. It is important to recognize the patterns you experience and whether the coping strategies you currently use are effective.

Prioritising

- Prioritising means choosing the most important things that need to be done.
- Does it all need to be done today? What else do I need to do today? Does it need to be done at all?

Planning

- Planning is about sorting out how you are going to get your activities done.
- It requires thinking about what you will need, how you are going to complete the task and where you will do it.
- Can I break the job down into different stages? What do I need to carry out the job? What positions does each stage involve (walking, sitting, and standing)?

Pacing

- The concept of 'pacing' involves doing an activity step-by-step at a manageable rate without making your fatigue worse.
- The principles of pacing involve:
 - taking regular, planned rests
 - sticking to your plan
 - changing your position frequently
 - using 'little and often' as a rule of thumb
 - being realistic – the aim is to succeed not fail.

Useful tips and advice

- Make a weekly diary
 - Think about the 3 P's.
 - Stick to it as much as possible.
- Vary your activities from hour to hour so that you are regularly changing demands on your body and mind.
- Plan challenging activities for the times when you are best able to tolerate them.
- Incorporate short relaxation breaks that enable you to recharge (a few minutes).
- Kitchen and cooking
 - Sit on a perching stool when preparing food.
 - Alternate cooking from scratch and ready or cold meals.
 - Prepare some meals in advance or batch cook on a less busy day.
- Bathroom and personal care
 - Sit down for some washing, dressing and grooming tasks.
 - Split tasks throughout the day – eg set out clothing the night before.
- Domestic tasks
 - Do housework little and often.
 - Ask for assistance (relative or cleaner) for heavy chores.
- Stay active
 - Go out daily, even for a few minutes.
 - Find exercise which you enjoy: dance, swimming, gym, walking, swimming.
 - Maintain social and leisure activities.
- Concentrating
 - Use checklists and reminders to reduce how much you need to remember.
 - Minimise distractions such as background noise.
 - Gather together everything you need before starting.