

Do you feel exhausted or tired a lot of the time...?

What is fatigue?

Fatigue is a tiredness or total exhaustion that often doesn't improve with rest. It makes it hard to function and do everyday tasks.

How do I know if I am fatigued?

- Mild tiredness to total exhaustion.
- A feeling of being 'drained'.
- Resting does not make it better.
- Having no energy or strength.
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed.
- Find it hard to do every day tasks.
- Lacking motivation.
- Find it hard to concentrate.
- Find it hard to think or speak.
- Low sex drive.
- Find it hard to cope with life.
- Difficulty in managing your feelings.

'Jenny's Story'

'Jenny' is a 45-year-old mother with a brain tumour who has three young children. Before her diagnosis she had lots of energy. She enjoyed playing netball, coaching the children's sporting teams and she helped out at the local school. Her husband says that she was difficult to keep up with. Since her treatment, 'Jenny' starts the day with some energy but by mid-morning she is struggling to keep going. She feels vague, useless and can't make sense of what she is doing. 'Jenny' wants to keep going but she just can't push herself any further. She feels that she can't achieve anything worthwhile and that she is letting her family down. All 'Jenny' wants to do is sleep.

Strategies

For the person with a brain tumour

- Try to do gentle exercise, such as walking, as this can help to lower fatigue levels.
- Physical therapy may be another option if you are ill or need to be on bed rest.
- Get lots of rest and make set rest times during the day.
- Talk with your doctor or nurse about a plan of regular exercise.
- Eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of liquids.
- Limit the number of activities.
- Get help when you need it.
- If you can, ask family, friends, and neighbours to help with daily chores, such as shopping, housework, or driving.
- Get up slowly to help stop dizzy spells after sitting or lying down.
- Speak to your doctor if you are finding it hard to sleep at night.
- Pace your activities, and take lots of rest breaks.
- Each day make a list of your responsibilities, and do the most important ones first while you still have the energy.
- Share tasks with someone else when you can.

For the carer/family member

- Give the person more help if it is needed.
- Offer to help, don't wait to be asked.
- Give the person some tasks to do that are not as tiring.
- Support them with a gentle exercise plan. For example, go for a short walk with them.
- Reduce the load and stress on your family member where you can.

KEY FACTS

A survey of people with a brain tumour found that 28% had considerable problems linked to feeling sleepy through the day and generally feeling tired and listless.

Questions to ask your health professional

- What is the cause of the fatigue?
- Is it related to the tumour itself?
- Is it related to the treatments given for the tumour or other medications?
- Could the fatigue be an unrelated medical condition and does this need treatment in itself?
- Do I/we expect the fatigue to get better or worse over time?
- Are there any medications that can help the problem?
- Will a psychologist be able to help treat this problem?
- Are there any diet or lifestyle factors that can help with the fatigue?



Links to other information:

- <http://braininjury.org.au/portal/fact-sheets/fatigue-and-lack-of-motivation---fact-sheet.html>