

Life can be fulfilling, dynamic and challenging, but it can also be exhausting. Fatigue is very common and is driven by life events, work commitments and your overall wellbeing.

Fatigue is the state of feeling very tired, weary or sleepy resulting from insufficient sleep, prolonged mental and physical work or extended periods of stress and anxiety. It can be a symptom of illnesses or an actual illness such as chronic fatigue syndrome.

Research has proven that an individual's performance is affected and errors more likely in tasks that require concentration, decision making, awareness, fast reactions and memory. Boring or repetitive tasks can intensify feelings of fatigue.

The signs and symptoms of fatigue include:

- tiredness.
- sleepiness, including falling asleep against your will ("micro" sleeps).
- irritability.
- depression.
- loss of appetite.
- digestive problems and increased susceptibility to illness.

The following tips may help you to fight fatigue:

- **Shift work** - If you are a shift worker and experiencing high levels of fatigue, talk to your line manager. At work stick to a scheduled rota that has been designed to reduce fatigue.
- **Try to arrive at work rested**- This may involve cooperation from friends and family if you work shifts and need to sleep during the day. Sleep should end as near to the beginning of a shift as is feasible. Night shift workers should not sleep as soon as they get home, but delay sleep until the afternoon. Coffee (caffeine) and daylight at the end of a night-shift will help you to stay awake. Try to reduce the light in the sleeping environment with dark curtains and reduce any noises- wear ear plugs if necessary.



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- **Schedule breaks into your day** - Use your breaks well – “switch off”. Plan your work into shorter bursts followed by a short break rather than marathon long sessions. Use the evenings, weekends and commuting time to unwind and relax.
- **Eat within 1 hour of waking** - The body needs to have carbohydrates (glycogen) within 1 hour of waking to fuel the brain (your brain is fuelled by oxygen and glycogen). The longer you leave eating, the less fuel your brain has.
- **Keep re-fuelling** - Eat some carbohydrates every 2-3 hours. Don't skip meals. Keep snacks to less than 100 calories (a handful of nuts not a 500g bag). Don't overeat as this is a big cause of sluggishness. Keep portion sizes small and eat regularly.
- **Drink more water** - Water is an essential ingredient in the production of energy molecules. Carry a water bottle with you and keep refilling it. The recommended amount of water to drink each day is 6-8 glasses.
- **The body was designed to be in motion** - Movement keeps our circulation active and the brain requires lots of fresh oxygen to fuel it. You therefore need to move more and sit less to increase energy levels. Even the slightest movement will increase blood circulation, bringing oxygen and vital nutrients to the body and mind.
Every 90 minutes you should move your major muscles. Aim to include activity into your day and try to achieve 30 minutes plus of exercise per day.
- **Manage stress** - Take action on issues that are within your control. You can reduce stress by getting to the source of it. List your sources of pressure and manage the ones you can control. Look for activities that eat up your time but deliver little value. Schedule less time for such activities or eliminate them completely.
- **Breathe to relax** - Making a conscious effort to deepen and slow down your breathing can help you relax and recuperate your energy levels.
- **Reduce your alcohol intake** - Alcohol will alter moods and emotions and affect sleep. Try to cut down or cut out of your daily routine.
- **Find time to relax before going to sleep** - Bedtime rituals can help you unwind and encourage a more restful sleep. Different activities work for different people. Try gentle music, soaking in a warm bath, meditation or relaxation exercises.
- **One obvious source of exhaustion is a lack of sleep or disruptive sleep patterns** - We have all experienced it. You wake up in the night and worry about work, relationships, commitments, debt and so on. Sleep deprivation (at its most extreme) can have a devastating effect on your body and mind. Try to get a good night's sleep and see your GP if you snore or find yourself inadvertently falling asleep – especially if you operate machinery or drive. Eating too late, especially with a diet that is very rich and accompanied by too many fluids, may also disrupt sleep.
- **Medication** - Consider the effects of prescription and non prescription medications as they can make you drowsy. Talk to your doctor if you are unsure.

