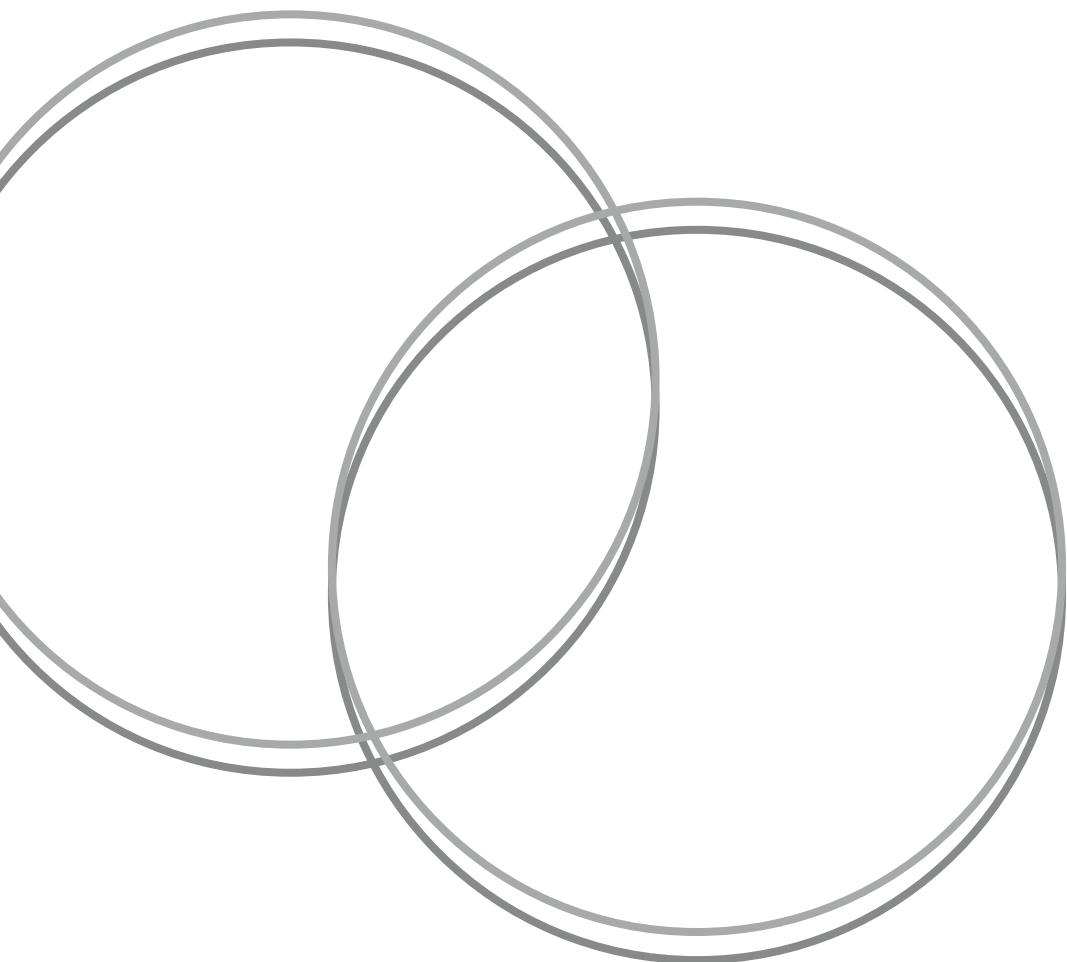




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Fatigue Management

Information for patients



Neurological Rehabilitation Service
Oxford Centre for Enablement

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 ‘cognitive’ 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

Primary fatigue

Physical disease, malfunction or injury of the brain or nervous system. This can make it more effortful for the brain and body to carry out daily activities.

Secondary fatigue

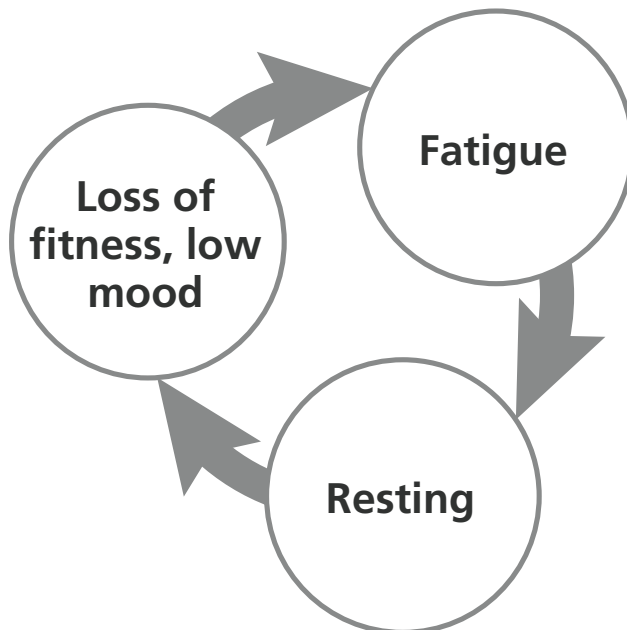
When you are living with a neurological condition, you may be more vulnerable to:

- Disrupted sleep
- Medication side effects
- Excess physical or cognitive effort
- Inactivity
- Poor nutrition
- Mood disturbance: stress, anxiety, depression
- Poor general level of fitness
- Environment – lighting, noise, temperature
- Social isolation

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.



Your Occupational Therapist can help you understand more about fatigue and why it may be occurring.

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

It helps to be curious about and open to exploring different ways of approaching activity when aiming to better control 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 and accept your fatigue, and how you need to manage it.

Energy Conservation and the 3 P's

Learning more about fatigue and strategies to manage it may be the first step towards managing your fatigue. It is important to recognize the patterns you experience and consider 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 do your activities.
- 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 – your aim is to succeed and build confidence in your abilities.

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).
- **Food Preparation**
 - Sit on a perching stool when preparing food.
 - Alternate cooking from scratch and ready cold or batch cooked meals prepared on a less busy day.
- **Bathroom and personal care**
 - Sit down for some washing, dressing and grooming tasks.
 - Split tasks throughout the day – e.g 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.

Want more information?

- **Speak to your Occupational Therapist**
about fatigue management strategies.
- **Speak to your GP**
regarding your medication.
- **Speak to a psychologist or Oxfordshire Talking Therapies**
if your mood is influencing your fatigue.
Website: www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk/live-well/sleep-and-tiredness

www.mssociety.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

Contact us

Neurological Rehabilitation Service

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Oxford Centre for Enablement

Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7HE

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
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