

# HOW TO MANAGE FATIGUE

*Many of us experience the symptoms of tiredness and fatigue in our everyday lives. There can be many causes, such as lack of sleep, poor nutrition, anxiety or for some people it can be due to an underlying long-term health condition.*

## What can we do to help ourselves in these situations?

Firstly, recognise that you are finding it hard to manage your everyday tasks due to the fatigue you are experiencing. Trying to push through and fight fatigue will likely make you more exhausted or at risk of further illness or injury.

Think about your own energy like a fuel tank in a car. We can have a full tank of fuel but burn it very quickly if we are not using it efficiently for example, if we do not change the gears. The following suggestions and tips are ways we can think about using our own energy (our fuel tank) to make the best use of it.

## The Five P's of Energy Conservation:

### 1. PLANNING AHEAD:

Plan how you are going to use your energy. Not everything has to be done every day or all in one day when you may feel energised. Plan out the tasks that must be done such as self-care activities like washing and dressing or household chores. Spread these tasks out over the day or throughout the week, to stop yourself from using all your energy in one go!



Set yourself a weekly schedule to spread the load over the week for the heavier weekly tasks, such as grocery shopping. Ensure that you protect times for resting across your day and week. It is important that you do not wait until you are exhausted before you rest.

Plan how you are going to do the task. There are several ways that you can reduce the effort required, by maybe doing the task differently or using equipment to make it easier. Think about whether a piece of equipment could make the task easier for you, for example if you are baking a cake maybe use an electric whisk rather than beating the ingredients by hand. Another idea may be to use the dishwasher rather than washing the dishes by hand.



### 2. PACING:

Pacing yourself, means breaking tasks down into smaller more manageable chunks, with rests in between. Do the more difficult tasks at your best time of the day when you have the most energy. It is important to allow yourself enough time to complete the task without being rushed.

One example of pacing would be if you were planning on hoovering the house. Firstly, break the task down into manageable chunks. You might begin upstairs, or in the largest room in the house.

Make sure you take breaks after hoovering each room and you may want to spread the load over the day or over a few days. Again, ensure that you do not wait until you are exhausted before you rest.



### 3. PRIORITISE:

It is very important to prioritise your tasks.

Ensure that you do the tasks that are most important and eliminate unnecessary tasks.

Be aware of when you need help completing tasks and do not be afraid to ask for help. Ask yourself, are there some tasks that would be better for someone else to do, such as moving heavy furniture or scrubbing the floor?

Most importantly, make sure that you save enough of your energy for doing the things that give you pleasure. This may be a hobby, playing with children/grandchildren or taking the dog for a walk.

### 4. POSITIONING:

Some of us forget to maintain a good posture when completing tasks, in order to get the task done quickly. However, good posture will save you energy. It is important to maintain a good posture during all activities including sitting, standing, walking, lifting, or carrying.

One example may be to sit rather than stand to do tasks such as ironing, washing up, peeling vegetables, or taking a shower.

Another example may be to use a tall stool when working at the counter or cooking.

### 5. POSITIVE ATTITUDE:

Be kind to yourself. Some days will be easier than others. Do not beat yourself up if you did not complete all of your planned tasks in one day or during the week. Accept that it was not a good day but look forward to tomorrow being better. Negative thoughts and emotions about ourselves in particular can be tiring and add to fatigue.

## Do not forget to rest!!

Relaxation, rest and sleep are important tools that we use to manage our fatigue as it allows our body and mind to recharge and reenergise.

It is important that you find a way of relaxing and resting that suits you. For some it may be yoga, listening to music or reading a book. For others, relaxing may be getting out for a walk or jog. Relaxing is not only important for our physical wellbeing but also for our mental wellbeing.

If you like to have a nap during the day, ensure that you limit the amount of time that you spend asleep. Remember that after 20 minutes asleep you enter into a deep sleep and this may result in you feeling sluggish on waking. Also think about the time of day that you are taking your nap. Naps late in the afternoon/early evening can be disruptive to night time sleep.

Sleep is essential for our bodies to recover. Prioritise sleep in your daily routine. If you have difficulty getting to sleep try and establish a wind down routine such as having a warm bath or a warm drink and not having a phone or tv in the bedroom and creating a comfortable restful environment.

Establishing a sleep routine where you go to bed and wake at the same time every day will help your body to develop a good sleeping pattern.

