

## Managing Fatigue during **COVID-19** Good Practice & Support for healthcare workers

Fatigue is a subjective feeling of needing to sleep (CAI). Due to the current immediate response to support healthcare staff during COVID-19 the College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland with their colleagues in the Association of Anaesthetists have given permission to WHWU to use their Fatigue Pack. This is a support resource for all healthcare staff in relation to managing fatigue and exhaustion.

### Contributing factors (ref: CAI 2020 [www.anaesthesia.ie](http://www.anaesthesia.ie)) – Organisation & Work

- Increased workloads
- Longer work hours
- Additional work pressures and stress
- Working in unfamiliar work locations and worksites
- Working alongside unfamiliar work colleagues
- Safety & Wellbeing of other healthcare workers
- Burden of decision making – principal of prioritising the use of scarce resources
- Allocation of finite healthcare resources
- Medical, ethical, societal challenges
- Prioritising duties outside current scope of practice

### Contributing Factors (ref: HSA [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie)) – Personal

- Poor diet, eating on the go, snacking and not having regular substantial healthy meals
- Not drinking enough water and keeping hydrated
- Not getting good sleep and poor sleeping habits
- Working without breaks
- Not getting fresh air and daylight when opportunity arises
- Not building good self-care techniques to switch off and rest when coming off shift
- Not having good personal support structures
- Not raising concerns or getting support when feeling fatigued

### Signs and Symptoms of Fatigue (ref: HSA [www.hsa.ie](http://www.hsa.ie))

- Doing tasks in the wrong order
- Finding it increasingly difficult to perform more than one task at once
- Forgetting to do things more and more
- Working on automatic and not thinking
- Falling asleep for small amounts of time
- Feeling tired or yawning all the time
- Being more irritable than usual
- Being frustrated by tasks
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being uncommunicative
- Not noticing risks or taking unusual risks
- Responding slowly to situations



## If you are feeling fatigued consider the following (COVID-19 specific supports)

### Coming Off shift

- Raise any concerns you have with your line manager
- Have you a long distance to drive home?
- Are you fit to drive home?
- Discuss with your line manager local supports in place for staff to rest before driving home
- Get some rest before taking on a long drive home when coming off a long shift
- Hydrate and eat before driving home
- Have water, charged mobile phone, fuel, defroster spray and other items available to you e.g. music, podcasts, audio books etc. in place before you start to drive
- Contact someone before you start your journey home letting them know your estimated time of arrival (ETA)
- If you get fatigued during your journey, follow the advice of the RSA: Stop, Sip, Sleep: pull over in a safe place, Sip coffee and sleep for 15 minutes
- Ensure your vehicle is roadworthy and in good condition e.g. lights, tyres, breaks, heating etc.

### Fatigue in general

- Raise any concerns you have with your line manager
- Are you practicing good self-care? (see below)
- Do you need to talk to someone in confidence? Remember it is good to talk and share your concerns
- Staff supports are available to you. Your local EAP HSE in-house services (link to contact numbers on next page) and external service providers Staffcare Line; a 24/7 confidential free service with direct access to qualified counsellors 1800-409388

### How you as a Line Manager can support your staff

- Speak to other manager colleagues on-site and keep updated on local supports available to staff coming off-duty e.g. off-site accommodation and welfare arrangements with local facilities
- Keep staff updated on these supports
- Keep checking-in with staff working on-duty
- Pay extra attention to staff coming off-duty looking for signs of fatigue
- Has a staff member a long drive home? Are they safe to drive?
- Provide information and encourage use of the local supports available when coming off-duty
- Remember during COVID-19 response staff are working long hours with greater demands; Keeping staff updated, advising them of the supports that are available to them
- Proactively promote self-care; encourage adequate sleep while off-duty; healthy eating and keeping hydrated. Promote staff supports including local EAP HSE in-house services and external service providers Staffcare Line; a 24/7 confidential free service with direct access to qualified counsellors 1800-409388
- Keep on 'open door policy' to encourage staff to approach you if they are experiencing difficulties

### Good Practice Self-care Tips

- Eat good nutritious food
- Keep well hydrated
- Get rest and naps where you can & ensure you give yourself adequate sleep opportunity
- Get fresh air and exercise where you can
- Make sure you are OK to drive when coming off long shift – if not seek support
- Speak to someone about any concerns you may have
- Follow all COVID-19 guidance. Visit [www.hse.ie/staff/news/news-items/prevent-the-spread-of-coronavirus-in-the-workplace](http://www.hse.ie/staff/news/news-items/prevent-the-spread-of-coronavirus-in-the-workplace).
- Follow guidance set out in CAI Fatigue Support Pack and support services as listed below

## COVID-19

### Support

*The HSE Workplace Health and Wellbeing unit offers a range of support services to help support healthcare workers physical, mental and psychological needs at this unprecedented time.*

*To find out more please log on to;*

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-unit/home/>

*Further on line supports include the following;*

<https://www2.hse.ie/services/campaigns/littlethings/about-littlethings.html>

*The most recent support published on March 16th on minding your mental health during the Covid-19 outbreak is available here;*

<https://healthservice.hse.ie/staff/news/coronavirus/staff-minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>

*The CAI, FICM, RCoA and Association of Anaesthetists have the following resources available:*

<https://www.aagbi.org/professionals/wellbeing/fatigue/fatigue-resources>

*HSE in-house EAP counselling and psychosocial support.*

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/staff/workplace-health-and-wellbeing-unit/your-support-services/>

*External Staffcare Line counselling is available 27/7 to all staff Telephone – 1800 40938*

*HSE Healthcare Worker Covid-19 Helpline 1850 420 420*

