



Fatigue Management

Fatigue is a very common symptom following an acquired brain injury. Fatigue can be:

- Cognitive fatigue: Getting tired from concentrating, talking, and thinking
- Physical fatigue: Getting tired from physical activity

Fatigue occurs more quickly and frequently than it would have prior to your brain injury. It often occurs from too much cognitive and/ or physical activity without adequate rest.

It is important to learn to self-manage fatigue as it can lead to feeling overwhelmed, irritability, anxiety, lack of motivation and worsening other brain injury symptoms.

Fatigue can be managed with **forward planning, pacing and regular rest**

1. Forward planning

- Plan and prioritise tasks. Using a calendar, planner or checklist will help manage mental fatigue
- Complete demanding tasks when you feel most alert
- Do one task at a time
- Keep areas uncluttered with regularly used items within reach
- Delegate tasks to others and set boundaries for your commitments

2. Pacing

- Break activities into a series of smaller tasks
- Gradually increase your activity: Start with what you can achieve with a little effort and then gradually build on that from week to week

3. Regular rest

- Schedule rest periods: Take regular rest breaks. "Rest" means do nothing at all, giving your brain a break
- Balance active and sedentary activities: Alternate cognitive activities (e.g., screen activities) with physical activities (e.g., going for a walk)
- Set a regular routine: To reduce the thinking effort required to constantly plan ahead

4. Build your activity tolerance

- Gradually increase your activity level to build your activity tolerance



Understanding your fatigue:

- Pay attention to the early signs of fatigue. Take a break when you first notice the signs to avoid overloading your brain.
- Be aware of situations or activities which make you feel tired e.g., busy environments, and plan accordingly. For example, plan to have frequent breaks or visit during quiet times.
- Monitor how long you can do certain activities before needing a rest and schedule your rest accordingly.
- Review your progress to gradually increase your activity level

Maintain a healthy lifestyle:

- Start with familiar tasks at home or work that you can complete without fatigue
- Get a good night's sleep (reduce day naps if affecting your night's sleep)
- Regular exercise to help you feel positive and energised
- No alcohol or illicit drugs that can affect your mood, reactions, and hydration
- Eat a healthy diet. Consider smaller more regular meals to ensure you have enough dietary resources to remain focussed and active
- Limited caffeine/energy drinks/sugar as they provide a false expectation of your body's energy levels
- Learn stress management techniques (mindfulness, deep breathing) to deal better with stress and pressure



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