

Workshop 11: Fatigue, Rest and Sleep

Feeling fatigued is really difficult to explain to other people. Fatigue is an overwhelming and long-lasting tiredness; it may be associated with many different health conditions and there are other causes of fatigue too.

Self-managing calls for determination and effort. Feeling fatigued can make managing our health and everything else even harder. If we feel constantly fatigued we can become depressed and feel very negatively about the future.

There are different experiences of fatigue. For example:

Other people's reactions to your fatigue

Difficulty explaining to others

Makes doing simple things difficult

The less you do, less you want to do

What experience have you had of feeling fatigued?

As well as our health condition, there are other things that make us feel fatigued. Only we know the main reasons why we feel fatigued, so we need to identify these reasons in order to take action to make changes.

Tick the ones that apply to you

Doing too much

Loss of fitness

Poor sleep

Not enough rest

Demands of others

Poor planning

Doing too little

Medication

Pain

Worry

If we think about the causes of fatigue that we have identified, then what might we do differently to reduce or manage our fatigue? For example:

Planning Activities

Exercise

Relaxation

Eating well

Rest

Learning to say no

Keeping socially active

Fresh air

Laughter

Improving our sleep

Medication as prescribed

Can you think of any other ideas?

Life with a health condition often requires us to do things differently. One of these differences is to take more breaks and rests. Breaking up our day into periods of being busy and resting helps us to feel less fatigued and we achieve more in the long run, yet many people feel guilty and are unable to rest.

Do you experience this?

Sleep

Another cause of fatigue is poor sleep and you might have found that your sleep is disturbed by your health condition. Perhaps you are unable to get into your comfortable sleep position, or you wake up to use the toilet frequently.

Once awake we often find getting back to sleep a problem. We begin to feel frustrated with ourselves and we worry about not getting back to sleep. We might find we are getting into a battle with ourselves.

What experience do you have of this? How does it feel?

Often we feel we are the only people experiencing this but we can see that these problems are quite common.

It may be helpful to establish a routine, both for bed-time or if we are lying awake. Perhaps you remember using one when you put your children to bed. Much as a good bed-time routine is important for children, so is it for an adult.

The key is to experiment to find out what works for you.

What can we do to help ourselves get a better night's sleep?

- Medication to re-establish sleep pattern
- Accept the existing pattern
- Mindfulness
- Don't just lie there, do something
- Establish routine
- Reduce caffeine (including chocolate)
- Relaxation
- Relaxing music or radio (with a timer)
- Aromatherapy
- Warm bath
- Milky drink
- Make a note of nagging worries
- Distraction technique