

# *Coping with Fatigue and Tiredness*

Managing your energy



*because  
you matter*

**St Nicholas**  
Hospice Care

A Registered Charity No. 287773

For an alternative format or  
language, please contact:  
[enquiries@stnh.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@stnh.org.uk)

# What is fatigue and tiredness?

**Fatigue is a state of persistent exhaustion that doesn't improve with rest, affecting both physical and emotional well-being. It can create a cycle where inactivity leads to increased tiredness, making daily life more difficult.**

**Fatigue is a common symptom among people living with long-term or life-limiting illnesses.**

## **Some of the side effects of fatigue include:**

- Feeling you have no energy or strength
- Difficulty doing small tasks such as brushing your teeth or making a cup of tea
- Reduced concentration and ability to make decisions
- Altered sleep pattern
- Losing interest in sex
- Feeling dizzy or light headed
- Low mood or change in emotions.

## **Energy conservation**

Conserving energy is important, and this leaflet offers tips to help reduce energy waste. Think of your energy like a battery or bank account, some activities drain it, while others help recharge it. Managing your energy levels can help you stay involved in the things that matter most to you.

## Activity cycling

**Activity cycling is when you don't have the energy to do a task, so you stop completely, and when you do have the energy, you over do it. This then makes you feel more tired. It is easy to get into this cycle, but using some of the following techniques could help.**

### The five P's rule

- **Plan** and organise your time. Plan your day ahead with periods of rest and periods of activity.
- **Prioritise** activities that you enjoy and that bring you pleasure.
- **Pace** yourself. Have frequent rests, do things in your own time and don't feel hurried by others.
- **Positioning** getting into a different position can save you energy. For example, sitting down to do your ironing, sort laundry, or chop vegetables uses less energy than doing it standing up.
- **Permission** it is ok to do things differently, give yourself permission to do this. It might involve asking for help and taking rests when needed.



**Even if you plan ahead, you might not always have enough energy to do the things you want to.**

**Be kind to yourself, don't worry if you can't get through all your activities in a day.**

# Practical help with daily tasks

**When suffering from fatigue and tiredness, it can be difficult to find the energy to do everyday tasks. Here are some tips and advice:**

## Personal care

- Try to sit down to get washed or dressed
- Use a toweled robe to help get dry after washing yourself
- Consider equipment such as a raised toilet seat or rails to help with getting on/ off your toilet
- Use a long handle shoe horn to avoid bending to put shoes on, or a long handled sponge when washing.
- Eat little and often to maintain energy levels.

## Around the home

- Consider using a perch stool for activities.
- Consider having a cleaner or gardener
- Ask family or friends to help with heavier household tasks
- Avoid unnecessary trips up and down the stairs, consider modifications to your home such as a stair lift.
- Cook simple meals or use convenience foods, avoid bending down to the oven and use a microwave instead.
- In the kitchen, store items so they are within easy reach, or move items down onto a worktop.

## Shopping

- Plan the day/time of your shopping trip to allow yourself enough energy to shop
- Write a list and plan your meals for the week in advance
- Use a trolley rather than a basket
- Ask for help at the checkout for packing your bags.
- Visit the shops when it is quieter
- Try to park close to the shops
- Consider online shopping or asking family/friends to help.

## Childcare

- Explain your feelings of tiredness to children to help them understand
- Plan activities you can do with them sitting down such as drawing, board game, puzzles, computer games
- Avoid lifting children – encourage them to climb up onto your knee
- Involve the children in simple household chores
- Use family / friends / babysitters from time to time to give yourself a break.

**An Occupational Therapist can give you advice on how to modify activity or provide equipment that may be helpful.**

## **In the workplace**

- Talk to your employer about your fatigue
- Discuss if you could change your hours or work more flexibly, spend some time working from home and in the office.
- Discuss altered duties if your job is physically/ mentally exerting
- Take short, regular breaks.

**For further advice, please speak to a member of the Independent Living Team**

## **Exercise and physical activity**

**Exercise is important, even when you feel fatigued and tired. Research has shown that gentle exercise may help reduce symptoms of fatigue.**

### **Basic tips for exercising when suffering from fatigue:**

- Engage in regular light exercise like walking
- Schedule exercise into your daily routine
- Pay attention to how your body responds post-exercise, such as sleep quality
- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids
- Keep a record of your activities to track progress
- Recognise that functional activities, like housework, count as exercise
- Gradually increase your exercise tolerance, starting with short walks and extending the duration over time.

**Exercise as much as you feel able to, but don't overdo it.**

## To promote quality sleep, consider these tips:

- Establish a consistent sleep routine with regular bed and wake times
- Avoid napping close to bedtime
- Get sunlight early to strengthen your sleep/wake rhythm
- Have a light snack or milky drink before bed to prevent hunger
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine and cheese in the evening
- Maintain room temperature around 18-19°C
- Minimise noise and light; use ear plugs and night mode on devices.
- Relax before sleep through reading or listening to calming recordings

**If you have any questions or would like more advice about managing fatigue, please speak to your Hospice healthcare professional or call us on 01284 766133.**

# Hospice **Advice line**

Call our 24/7 advice line for health care professionals and families if you need support with symptom management and end-of-life care.

**enquiries@stnh.org.uk**  
**www.stnicholashospice.org.uk**

**01284 766133**

## Your Experience **Survey**

We're always looking to improve what we do, and your feedback can really help us. Please consider filling in our survey, it is available online or paper form by request.

**www.stnicholashospice.org.uk**  
**/your-experience-survey**



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