

Fighting Fatigue

Take It Ezzy



Fatigue

Fatigue is caused by a physical or mental exertion OR insufficient sleep that results in a markedly reduced performance or ability to perform a task. Fatigue is a dangerous condition that may have dangerous consequences if people are operating machinery or vehicles.

Signs & Symptoms

Fatigue can cause a vast range of other physical, mental and emotional symptoms including:

- Can't keep eyes open
- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble focussing with eyes
- Poor hand eye coordination
- Feeling sluggish or tired
- Excessive blinking
- Constant yawning
- Headache
- Reduced immune system function
- Appetite loss
- Short term memory problems
- Dizziness
- Sore or aching muscles
- Muscle weakness
- Slowed reflexes and responses
- Irritability
- Low motivation

What causes fatigue?

- Lifestyle related causes
- Workplace issues
- Psychological causes

Lifestyle & emotional related causes

Common lifestyle choices that can cause fatigue include:

- **Lack of sleep** - adults need about eight hours of sleep per night. Because of work, family, social commitments and other reasons, some people 'burn the candle at both ends' and try to get by on fewer hours of sleep. New parents are commonly sleep deprived, since babies wake often for food or comfort.
- **Too much sleep** - adults sleeping more than 11 hours per day can lead to excessive daytime sleepiness.
- **Alcohol and drugs** - alcohol is a depressant drug that slows the nervous system and disturbs normal sleep patterns. Other drugs, such as cigarettes and caffeine, stimulate the nervous system and make insomnia more likely.
- **Sleep disturbances** - disturbed sleep may occur for a number of reasons, for example, noisy neighbours, young children who wake in the night, a snoring partner, or an uncomfortable sleeping environment such as a stuffy bedroom.
- **Lack of regular exercise and sedentary behaviour** - physical activity is known to improve fitness, health and wellbeing, reduce stress, and boost energy levels. It also helps you sleep. Regular exercise is also an effective treatment for anxiety and depression.
- **Poor diet** - low kilojoule diets, low carbohydrate diets or high energy foods that are nutritionally poor don't provide the body with enough fuel or nutrients to function at its best. Quick fix foods, such as chocolate bars or caffeinated drinks, only offer a temporary energy boost that quickly wears off and worsens fatigue.
- **Individual factors** - events that impact on the individual can cause fatigue. These may include personal illness or injury, illnesses or injuries in the family, too many commitments (for example, working two jobs) or financial problems.

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Workplace related causes

Common workplace issues that can cause fatigue include:

- **Shift work** - the human body is designed to sleep during the night. This pattern is set by a small part of the brain known as the circadian clock. A shift worker confuses their circadian clock by working when their body is programmed to be asleep. Sleeping during the day is usually difficult, because the person's brain chemicals are naturally set to 'wakefulness' mode.
- **Poor workplace practices** - can add to a person's level of fatigue. These may include long work hours, hard physical labour, irregular working hours (such as rotating shifts), stressful work environment (such as excessive noise or temperature extremes), boredom, working alone with little or no interaction with others, or fixed concentration on a repetitive task.
- **Workplace stress** - can be caused by a wide range of factors including job dissatisfaction, heavy workload, conflicts with bosses or colleagues, bullying, constant change, or threats to job security.
- **Burnout** - can be described as striving too hard in one area of life while neglecting everything else. 'Workaholics', for example, put all their energies into their career, which puts their family life, social life and personal interests out of balance.
- **Unemployment** - financial pressures, feelings of failure or guilt, and the emotional exhaustion of prolonged job hunting can lead to stress, anxiety, depression and fatigue.

Psychological causes

Studies suggest that psychological factors are present in at least 50 per cent of fatigue cases. These may include:

- **Depression** - this illness is characterised by severe and prolonged feelings of sadness, dejection and hopelessness. People who are depressed commonly experience chronic tiredness.
- **Anxiety and stress** - a person who is chronically anxious or stressed keeps their body in overdrive. The constant flooding of adrenaline exhausts the body, and fatigue sets in.
- **Grief** - losing a loved one causes a wide range of emotions including shock, guilt, depression, despair and loneliness.

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The best way to overcome fatigue is to get good healthy sleep. People who feel fatigued should also change their lifestyle patterns:

- Increase your intake of fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grain foods and legumes, lean meats, poultry, fish and low fat dairy products.
- Don't skip meals or go on crash diets.
- Reduce your intake of caffeine, Guarana, alcohol and other stimulants and depressants
- Avoiding foods that hold little nutritional value, such as sugar and fatty foods
- Increasing your physical activity (30 mins of moderate exercise per day)
- Improve your time management skills to work smarter, not harder
- Reducing negative effects of stress by learning to say no, making more time for relaxing, sleeping, exercising and having fun.
- Accepting more help when you need it.
- Learn your body's signs of getting tired, take breaks during and between tasks, before you get tired.
- Change the way you do activities so that you don't put too much stress on your joints
- Maintain a good posture. Poor posture can stress your muscles and lead to fatigue.