



Fatigue following Stroke

Life after Stroke Tailored Talk

What is fatigue?

- Fatigue is the body's response to metabolic, physical, or immune stress.
- Fatigue is not just “being tired” – it also includes symptoms like disturbed sleep, slower reflexes, aches and pains, problems with concentration and memory, or difficulty shaking off infections.
- When you have a stroke, this can trigger fatigue. Sometimes this post-stroke fatigue (PSF) will pass in time, but sometimes, the fatigue may last for a much longer time.





What causes post-stroke fatigue

What causes post-stroke fatigue?

- The physical process of healing from a stroke can take a lot of energy. This makes it harder to find energy for other things.
- The stroke itself can cause neurological and metabolic damage, which may express itself as fatigue.
- You may have lost physical mobility after the stroke. Learning to work around these changes in your capabilities can be exhausting, and contributes to fatigue.
- Some people are more inactive and do less exercise after a stroke. This inactivity can make fatigue worse.
- Depression and psychological stress can also make fatigue worse.
- In the long term, medication and comorbid conditions are the biggest factors in fatigue.

Symptoms of fatigue



Symptoms of fatigue

People can experience various symptoms during fatigue. Some of the most common ones are-

- Yawning
- Losing concentration/'fuzzy head'
- Irritable
- Eyes feeling heavy
- Fidgety
- Legs feel weak
- Off Balance

Other common symptoms of fatigue include-

- Extreme tiredness
- Not enough sleep / too much sleep
- Feelings of loss of control in life
- Finding it hard to make decisions

Triggers of fatigue



Triggers of fatigue

Things that trigger fatigue will be different for everyone. It can take time to work out what your triggers are but doing this helps you to manage it. Some examples might include-

- working at a computer
- dealing with paperwork / correspondence
- being in a busy environment, such as a shop
- concentrating on multiple conversations
- listening in a noisy place
- travelling on public transport or in the car



Managing life with fatigue

Managing life with fatigue

Fatigue affects all aspects of your life-

- Some people say it's hard to engage with other parts of recovery as a result.
- It is important to be patient with yourself, and to listen to your body. Pushing through the fatigue and trying to work despite exhaustion will make the fatigue worse.
- Accept that things may take longer to do, and try to recognise signs that you may be pushing yourself too hard.
- A support network can help you to manage your fatigue more effectively. This might be friends, family, medical professionals, or a community group.
- Spacing out your commitments and giving yourself plenty of time to recover is a crucial part of managing your fatigue.



Fatigue management- the 4 P's

Managing fatigue- the 4 P's

A strategy which may help you manage your fatigue- known as the '4 P's'

- Pacing– balancing your activities out
- Prioritising– which tasks are essential?
- Planning– organisations of your day / tasks
- Problem solving– its not what you do, its how you do it
- **NB: If you find something isn't working, use the other 'P's to resolve the problem and help you decide what to do about it**

Fatigue Management – the 4 P's in practice

Pacing

- Plan rest breaks before you start
- Balance heavy and lighter jobs across the day / week
- Take microbreaks – stretch and relax

Planning

- Do you have everything you need before you start?
- Can someone else help?
- Can you do the task when you are most alert?

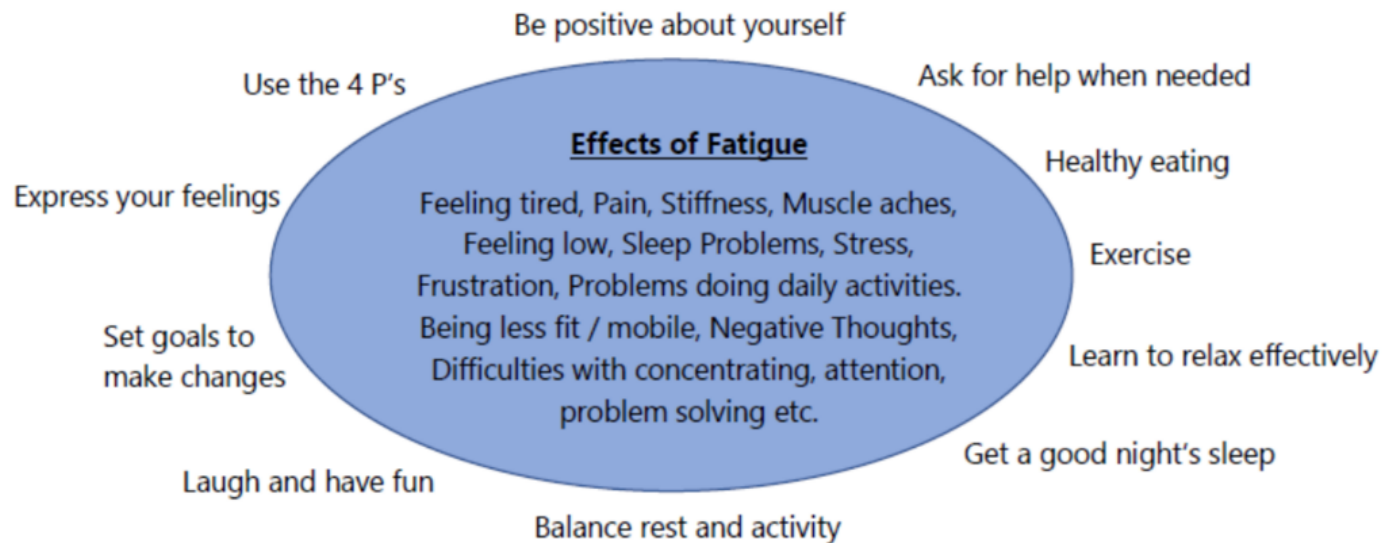
Prioritising

- What do you really have to do today?
- Is it important to you?
- Are you the only person that can do the task?

Problem solving

Try a task – did it work?
If not, apply the 4 P's and try another way / ask for help

Managing Fatigue Successfully



Fatigue management– 'Energy Bank Account'

Lots of activities can drain our energy but we all have things we can do to re-charge our batteries too. Below are some examples of things which people may find can reduce their energy and things they do which help. These may not apply to you but you can try this exercise and identify your own 'withdrawals' and '**deposits**', to help you manage fatigue.

Withdrawals (what takes your energy away?): Driving, Parties, Long 'to-do' lists, Being very busy, Meetings, Rushing.

Deposits (what helps to give you energy?): Walking and being outside (fresh air), Reading or listening to a book, Watching TV, Exercise, Listening to Music, Yoga, Meditation.

For more information on fatigue download the [CHSS Tiredness and Fatigue Essential Guide](#)



Exercise with fatigue



Exercise with fatigue

Exercise can be one of the best ways to help you recover from post-stroke fatigue. However, exercise may be difficult when you are experiencing fatigue, as well as other stroke symptoms. Here are some hints and tips to support you-

- it is important to talk to your physiotherapist or occupational therapist about exercises that suit your needs and abilities.
- try to exercise regularly, in short 'bursts'.
- you can build up over time how much exercise you are able to do.
- for more information on exercise post-stroke download the [CHSS Physical Activity Essential Guide](#)

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The following organisations contributed to this presentation

Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland



NHS Lothian

