



Healthy ageing & lifestyle

Fact Sheet No.4

Fatigue Part 1: The causes of fatigue

Fatigue is a symptom rather than a condition, it affects people of all ages and can be associated with a lack of energy and motivation.

Lack of energy is usually associated with weakness and this is demonstrated by loss of strength and muscle weakness.

Healthcare professionals will sometimes find it difficult to distinguish fatigue from other common symptoms, such as tiredness, and this can lead to treatment being delayed until the situation has become chronic.

Top tip: Take fatigue seriously, it may be associated with an underlying condition and it probably won't go away on its own.

What causes fatigue?

Fatigue can be caused by a combination of factors e.g. if you are experiencing pain this may interfere with your sleep, which in turn can affect how you function during the day. You may have an acute or chronic condition which can cause temporary fatigue.

Various individual factors that can cause fatigue

Medical conditions

- Anaemia
- Respiratory problems, COPD, chest infections
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Diabetes
- Hormonal imbalance e.g. thyroid deficiency
- Immune system disorders
- Sleep disorders e.g. sleep apnoea
 - Infections: acute bacterial or viral e.g. urinary tract
 - Chronic inflammation, such as that caused by IBS
- Kidney disease
- Low blood pressure (hypotension)
- Cancer and its treatment

Mental and emotional health

- Depression

- Anxiety
- Grief
- Stress
- Boredom

Medications:

- Certain painkillers and muscle relaxants, chemotherapy, antidepressants



Lifestyle

- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Unhealthy eating, including not drinking enough water
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise

Disclaimer

The information and opinions shared on this website are based on my personal experience of working in the health sector and research I have carried out whilst writing articles; it is of a general nature and should not be used as a substitute for seeking medical advice. My aim is to ensure that this information is accurate and kept up to date, but you should always consult the appropriate healthcare professionals if you have a concern about your health.

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