

MANAGING YOUR FATIGUE

What is Fatigue?

- Feeling of extreme tiredness that makes it difficult to function normally
- Influenced by the disease process, cognitive impairments and biomechanical changes
- Experience of fatigue is different with every person

Why Do I Feel So Tired?

Fatigue is a feeling of extreme tiredness that makes it difficult to function normally. It is a symptom of many chronic diseases.

What things make me tired?

It is important to figure out what is behind the energy depletion. There could be physical, cognitive, emotional or environment reasons and could include the following:

- Lack of activity and decreased physical conditioning.
- Lack of sleep
- Emotional components: depression, stress, feelings of helplessness
- Medications
- Pain
- Poor positioning and equipment
- Brain overload

Our Energy Bank

Think about your body's energy stores as money in a bank account. You make deposits and withdrawals based on a budget so that you have enough energy for all your daily activities. If you empty your bank account of energy, you will not have enough to do all that you need to in a day.

IDEAS TO HELP MANAGE FATIGUE:

1. To improve sleep:

- Keep the same bedtime and “wake-up” time, even on the week-ends
- Avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, cocoa and soft drinks) and alcohol
- Stick to a relaxing routine before bedtime (warm bath, music, relaxation tape)
- Avoid the following before bedtime:
 - Strenuous or stressful activities (paying bills, doing housework)
 - Eating or drinking too much
 - watching TV
 - Using the computer
- If you still have difficulty with initiating or maintaining sleep, keep a “sleep log” and discuss this issue with your physician
- www.sleepfoundation.org

2. To improve overall health:

- Eat regular, nutritious meals and snacks.
- www.dialadietian.org or phone # 604-732-9191
- Drink at least 8 glasses of water every day. Dehydration can increase feelings of fatigue.
- Being out of shape (“deconditioning”) lowers your stamina and makes fatigue worse. Regular exercise increases lung capacity and your body’s ability to use oxygen efficiently. It can increase your strength and energy reserves. Your therapist can prescribe an appropriate fitness program.

3. To conserve energy:

Energy conservation is a way to use your energy wisely while doing everyday activities. By following the principles of energy conservation, you can create a balanced lifestyle. You can ensure you have enough energy to do the things you enjoy. Consider the 5 P’s:

Pacing

A common error is to deny your tiredness and carry on as usual, instead of setting a new pace that allows for more rest periods or different ways or doing things. Be realistic.

- Balance activities with rest breaks or relaxation time. **Rest before you are tired.**
- Alternate your activities, change from a strenuous task to a lighter one, or from a sedentary job to an active one.

Prioritizing

- Make sure you balance your life and make time for all the activities you need to do during the day.
- Decide what is most important to you, somewhat important and least important.
- Allow people to help you whenever possible.
- Decide what tasks could be eliminated, ask “Is this really necessary?”

Planning

Just as you budget enough money to make sure you don’t overspend, you must plan to budget your energy for the activities you need to do.

Keep your energy bank as full as possible. Make time to re-fill your energy reserves.

- Take time each week to plan out the next week and prepare a weekly calendar/schedule that lists the urgent and important things to do. If you find you have too many urgent tasks, and not enough balance, then re-think your priorities, share or pass tasks on to others, and learn to say “no” without feeling guilty.
- Spread heavier tasks out over the week. Do harder activities when you feel best.
- Try to save “steps” and eliminate extra trips.
- Select the best tools for the job, use labour-saving devices or adaptive equipment

Positioning

Your environment and how you stand/sit (position yourself) can make a difference.

- Use good posture. Poor posture requires more energy because muscles have to work against gravity.
- Sit to perform tasks whenever possible and take frequent stretch breaks. Consider sitting during performance of activities such as washing, dressing, preparing ingredients for cooking or folding clothes.
- Avoid awkward postures and practice proper lifting techniques. If possible, push rather than lift things. Use a wheeled cart or walker with a basket to help you carry items at home or in a store.
- Make sure your work area is at the correct height and your body is supported.
- Take a break to stretch and move around every 15 minutes.
- A good sleep position is one that keeps your spine straight and your limbs relaxed.
- Use tools to make tasks easier (i.e. food processor, microwave)

Prevention

- Listen to your body's natural call for a rest and do not feel guilty if you need to take a rest.
- Try to work in quiet surroundings and minimize the amount of "white noise".
- Go shopping when it is least busy.
- Avoid driving in rush hour.
- -Know your limits and prevent fatigue by incorporating energy conservation strategies.
- Find ways to replenish our "energy bank".
 - o Do at least one enjoyable activity each day.
 - o Consider breathing and relaxation techniques, meditation and listening to calming music.

Websites

www.livingwellwithcancer.com

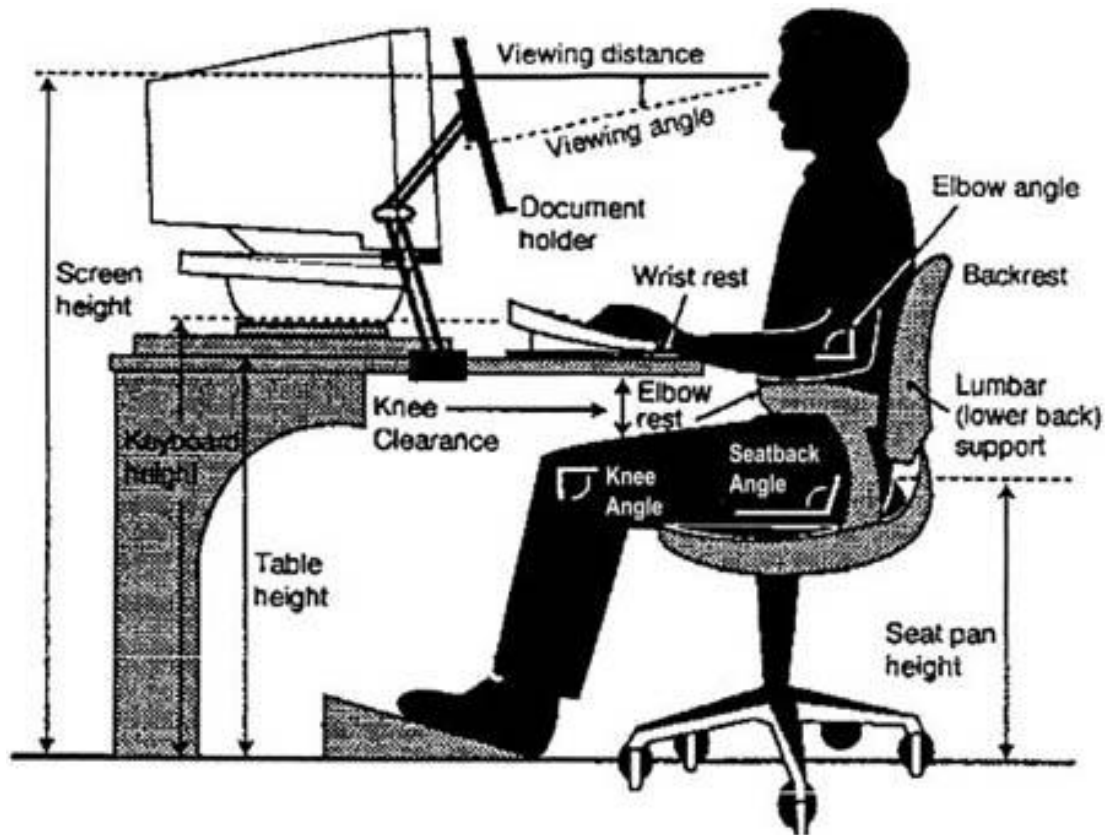
www.brainumor.ca

www.mssociety.ca

www.sleepfoundation.org

Refs: What can I do to Cope with Tiredness/Fatigue? – Jane Millard, O.T., 2002
Energy Conservation – Vancouver Coastal Health, April 2005
Living well with MS: Managing Fatigue

Ergonomic set-up while sitting at a computer:



KEY Things to Keep in Mind:

- Change your positions often
- Take breaks
- Stretch
- Support your feet
- Keep your wrist neutral
- Set the top of the monitor in line with eyes

Action Plan Form:

In writing your action plan, be sure it includes the following,

1. WHAT you are going to do,
2. HOW MUCH you are going to do it,
3. WHEN you are going to do it, and
4. HOW MANY days a week you are going to do it.

For example: “This week, I will walk (WHAT) around the block (HOW MUCH) before lunch (WHEN) three (HOW MANY).

Be specific and realistic!

HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU IN FOLLOWING THROUGH WITH YOUR PLAN?

To help you determine how realistic it may be, rate how CONFIDENT you feel about following through with your action plan out of 10 (i.e. 0 being not at all confident; 10 being totally confident), if you rate yourself under 7 then you may want to reconsider and modify your action plan to something you feel more confident with.

THIS WEEK I WILL ...

	WHAT?
	HOW MUCH?
	WHEN?
	HOW MANY?
(0 = not at all confident; 10 = totally confident)	HOW CONFIDENT?

Sample of a weekly check-in table:

	CHECK OFF	COMMENTS
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		