

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is feeling weary or tired, or having a lack of energy that does not go away when you rest. People can experience fatigue in their body (physical fatigue) or in their mind (psychological fatigue).

Often, fatigue can be traced to your routines or habits. It can be a response to physical demands, poor eating habits, emotional stress, boredom and lack of sleep. If your fatigue is related to a medical condition, seek out medical advice.

When fatigue is not relieved by enough sleep, good nutrition or a low-stress environment, then it is recommended that you seek medical treatment.

Lifestyle Choices

Suggestions for lifestyle choices to help avoid fatigue:

- Cut down or eliminate smoking
- Increase your physical activity and maintain your fitness through exercise
- Break up long bouts of sitting
- Take steps to address workplace issues

Get a Good Night Sleep

Fatigue is often related to our sleep. Be sure to:

- Get enough sleep during the night
- Limit caffeine and other drugs as they affect sleep
- Avoid sleeping pills as they don't address the causes of insomnia
- Learn how to relax

Take Care of Your Mind

Psychological issues often cause fatigue. Try these strategies:

- Talk about your fatigue
- Reduce your stress as it uses a lot of energy
- Assess your lifestyle
- Learn to do nothing
- Have more fun

Eat Well

Dietary choices can increase energy in daily life:

- Drink plenty of water
- Make healthy choices, such as increasing the amount of fruit, vegetables, whole-grain foods, low-fat dairy products and lean meats you eat
- Reduce high-fat, high-sugar and high-salt foods from your diet
- Don't skip meals as skipping meals allows blood sugars to dip
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced breakfast
- Eat smaller-portioned meals throughout the day
- Don't overeat as large meals tend to drain energy
- Eat foods that are rich in iron

Mid-Afternoon Slump

It is normal for people to feel drowsy after lunch. This mid-afternoon energy slump has been well documented, as it is "hard-wired" into the human body. To help you cope with this anticipated lack of energy:

- Incorporate the above suggestions into your lifestyle
- Eat a combination of protein and carbohydrates for lunch
- Get moving after lunch, even a 10-minute brisk walk helps

Education

Education and awareness training should cover the following topics:

- What is fatigue?
- Warning signs of fatigue
- Factors that help with or worsen fatigue
- Possible effects of fatigue
- Control measures, such as a fatigue management plan

Energy Safety Canada has a free online resource, "Fatigue Risk Management: A Program Development Guideline," to help with hazard identification and risk assessment.

It can be downloaded through their website at:
www.energysafetycanada.com