



FATIGUE MANAGEMENT PLAN

**For discussing possible causes
of uncomplicated fatigue in
young to middle-aged adults**



WHAT IS FATIGUE?

Fatigue is a term used to describe a feeling of constant tiredness that doesn't get better with rest. There are a lot of different ways that people might explain a feeling of fatigue, such as being tired all the time, constantly exhausted, weak, sluggish or even knackered.

► Fatigue is common

Fatigue can affect anyone and is not relieved with rest. Most adults will experience fatigue at some point. Each year around 1.5 million Australians see their doctor about fatigue.

► Fatigue is not 'one size fits all'

Fatigue is a symptom, not a condition. While medical conditions may explain fatigue in some people, more often it will be a combination of lifestyle, social, psychological and general wellbeing issues.

For most people fatigue will get better over time on its own or with some simple and practical lifestyle changes.

► Managing fatigue in your patient

Undertaking a thorough clinical history and targeted physical examination are essential first steps in evaluating patients with fatigue. When testing is not indicated, patient expectations need to be managed, as dealing with symptoms that are not readily explained medically can be frustrating.

The *Fatigue Management Plan* provides a prompt for communication about possible causes of a patient's fatigue, and opens an avenue for discussing appropriate lifestyle interventions that may improve their symptoms.

References

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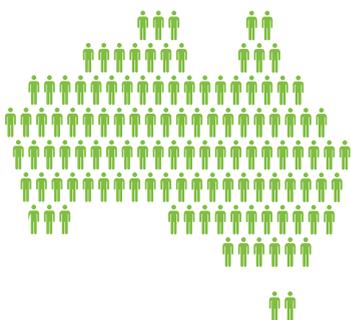
FATIGUE CAN HAVE MANY CAUSES

DO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING APPLY TO YOU?

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 
STRESS AT WORK | <input type="checkbox"/> 
STUDY | <input type="checkbox"/> 
MEDICINES | <input type="checkbox"/> 
SLEEP APNOEA | <input type="checkbox"/> 
DEPRESSION | <input type="checkbox"/> 
ANAEMIA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 
STRESS AT HOME | <input type="checkbox"/> 
OVERWORK | <input type="checkbox"/> 
EXERCISE | <input type="checkbox"/> 
GRIEF OR LOSS | <input type="checkbox"/> 
ANXIETY | <input type="checkbox"/> 
THYROID DYSFUNCTION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 
CHANGES TO THE FAMILY DYNAMIC | <input type="checkbox"/> 
PROBLEMS WITH MONEY | <input type="checkbox"/> 
ALCOHOL & DRUGS | <input type="checkbox"/> 
FEELING DOWN | <input type="checkbox"/> 
SLEEP PROBLEMS | <input type="checkbox"/> 
OTHER |

IN SOME CASES, A CAUSE FOR FATIGUE CANNOT BE IDENTIFIED

FATIGUE IS COMMON



1.5 MILLION
AUSTRALIANS SEE THEIR DOCTOR ABOUT FATIGUE EVERY YEAR



1 IN 5
PEOPLE FEEL UNUSUALLY TIRED



1 IN 10
PEOPLE HAVE PROLONGED FATIGUE

MOST FATIGUE GETS BETTER OVER TIME OR WITH SOME PRACTICAL LIFESTYLE CHANGES

THINGS TO TRY



REDUCE CAFFEINE INTAKE ESPECIALLY IN THE AFTERNOON AND EVENING



GET ENOUGH EXERCISE



MANAGE YOUR PRESCRIPTION, OVER-THE-COUNTER AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINES



REDUCE ALCOHOL INTAKE



MAKE SURE YOUR BEDROOM AND BED ARE COMFORTABLE - NOT TOO HOT/COLD/NOISY



IDENTIFY STRESS IN YOUR LIFE - IS THERE ANY WAY TO REDUCE THE IMPACT?



PLAN YOUR WEEK AND SPREAD OUT YOUR TASKS. BE REALISTIC ABOUT WHAT YOU CAN ACHIEVE EACH DAY

There are many practical steps that can be taken to help reduce and manage fatigue. Talk with your doctor about which actions listed below might be useful for your situation.

NAME:

DATE:



Eat a healthy diet that meets your energy needs

A diet that lacks adequate nutrition will prevent your body from being able to perform regular daily activities.

Current Australian guidelines recommend eating a wide variety of nutritious foods from the following five food groups every day:

- ▶ vegetables and legumes/beans
- ▶ fruit
- ▶ grains, mostly wholegrain and high-fibre cereal
- ▶ lean meats and poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts and seeds
- ▶ milk, yoghurt, cheese or their alternatives, mostly reduced fat.



Drink less alcohol

Alcohol might make you feel relaxed, but it doesn't encourage refreshing sleep. If you choose to drink alcohol, limit your intake according to Australian guidelines and try not to drink close to bedtime.



Enjoy regular moderate exercise

Exercising regularly can help to improve your energy levels and reduce feelings of physical and mental fatigue. However, exercising too often or too intensely may not give your body time to recover, leading to fatigue.



Reduce caffeine

If you are feeling fatigued, it can be tempting to use caffeine as a pick-me-up. However, too much caffeine can interrupt your sleep patterns and worsen your fatigue. Try to cut down slowly to avoid withdrawal headaches.



Practice good sleep hygiene

It's not just quantity (the number of hours) that counts when it comes to sleep. How well you sleep (the quality of your sleep) can have a big impact on how you function the next day. Simple measures to help your sleep quality include:

- ▶ avoid naps during the day. If you do nap, keep it to 20 minutes and before 3pm
- ▶ avoid heavy meals, exercise or working on the computer late in the evening
- ▶ make sure your bedroom is not too hot or cold.



Reduce your stress

Try taking regular time out for yourself and learning different ways to relax and unwind (eg, yoga, tai chi or meditation). It might also be helpful to work with someone who can help you identify and manage the major stress factors in your life. Speak with your doctor about finding a psychologist or counsellor who can help.



Look after your emotional and mental health

Feelings of grief, worry or sadness that continue for prolonged periods of time, or out of proportion to the situation, can lead to emotional and mental fatigue. Left untreated these feelings can affect your life, relationships and health. If you feel you need help, talk to a family member, friend or health professional. There are also confidential support services available over the phone such as Lifeline (13 11 14) or MensLine Australia (1300 789 978).



Scan the QR code to find out more about fatigue or visit: www.nps.org.au/fatigue



NEXT STEPS

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If your fatigue worsens or you notice other signs/symptoms please contact your doctor immediately.