

Fatigue

An Introduction



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» Table of Contents

01

Planning and Prioritizing

Create a weekly plan with realistic goals and a "if-then" plan. For example, if you don't feel up to going to the swimming pool, you can take a short walk instead.

02

Diet and Hydration

Eat a healthy and varied diet. Follow the official dietary guidelines: eat fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and fish, and drink plenty of water.

03

Physical Activity

Regular exercise can help improve your energy levels. It doesn't have to be intense; daily walks or light exercise can make a big difference.

04

Sleep Better

Ensure good sleep hygiene. Establish a regular sleep schedule and create a calm sleep environment to improve sleep quality. Poor sleep can exacerbate daytime fatigue.

05

Mental Relaxation

Relaxation exercises, meditation, or simply taking time for relaxing activities such as listening to music or reading a book can help reduce mental fatigue.

>> An Introduction

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Fatigue, also known as chronic fatigue, is a persistent state of exhaustion that affects both physical and mental capacity and does not necessarily improve with rest or sleep. This condition can be a significant burden and greatly impact quality of life. It can be associated with many diseases, including arthritis, where fatigue is a common symptom.

What is Fatigue?

Have you ever experienced a fatigue that feels like you're coming down with a fever? Completely exhausted and unable to do anything. That's how it feels to suffer from fatigue. Fatigue is both a physical and mental tiredness that can arise as a comorbidity to many diagnoses. This type of fatigue can be felt as much more intense than ordinary tiredness. It exhausts you and drains your energy and strength. For some, the fatigue is so overwhelming in daily life that it is described as worse than the pain caused by the primary disease.

Types of Fatigue

In the professional field, disease-related fatigue (also called fatigue) is often divided into five categories according to the MFI-20 questionnaire (Multidimensional Fatigue Inventory):

1. General fatigue
2. Physical fatigue
3. Mental fatigue
4. Reduced activity
5. Reduced motivation

Nurses and doctors use the MFI-20 questionnaire to get a comprehensive view of the dominant type of fatigue in patients

Fatigue can be mitigated in several ways, and the appropriate method depends on the specific type of fatigue you have. Are you lacking energy? Are your muscles weak? Or do you have difficulty concentrating? There are several different questionnaires to assess fatigue, and the MFI-20 is just one of them.

Characteristics of Different Types of Fatigue

- General Fatigue: This is an overall feeling of being tired, both physically and mentally. General fatigue can be a mix of the other four types of fatigue.
- Physical Fatigue: This occurs when your muscles and body feel tired. Do you feel in good or poor physical condition? Can you endure a lot or only a little?
- Mental Fatigue: This happens when you have difficulty thinking and concentrating. Do your thoughts easily drift away from the topic? Do you have to exert effort to concentrate?
- Reduced Activity: This is when you move less. Are you very active or only a little active during the day? Do you feel active or inactive?
- Reduced Motivation: This is when you lack the desire to start an activity. Do you have many plans? Do you want to do many things? Or do you feel exhausted just thinking about doing something?

The better you can describe the type of fatigue you are experiencing, the better you can work with your nurse and/or doctor to find the right approach for you.

Is Fatigue the Same as Tiredness?

The fatigue you experience is typically referred to by nurses and doctors as fatigue or disease-related fatigue. In French, "fatigue" means "tiredness" or "exhaustion." Healthcare providers use the term fatigue to distinguish between normal tiredness and the pronounced fatigue associated with illness.

The fatigue you feel is different from the common tiredness everyone experiences from lack of sleep or overexertion.



Chapter 1

Planning and Prioritizing



>> Planning & Prioritizing

What Can You Do to Minimize Fatigue?

There are many actions you can take to reduce the impact of fatigue on your daily life with Planning and Prioritizing. Create a weekly plan with realistic goals and a "if-then" plan. For example, if you don't feel up to going to the swimming pool, you can take a short walk instead.

What You Can Do

The fatigue experienced by many people with rheumatoid arthritis can sometimes drain your energy. As a result, fatigue might prevent you from moving more than absolutely necessary. However, even though it might seem overwhelming, you actually gain more energy by staying active. Several studies show that you can minimize fatigue by ensuring you move throughout the day. Even small changes, such as reducing the time spent sitting, have a positive impact on both pain and fatigue.

How Much Should You Move?

You don't need to run 10 km several times a week to reap the benefits of physical activity. For those with arthritis, regular exercise can often seem daunting, so it's important to remember that even the smallest movement makes a difference. Activity isn't just about strenuous exercise; it's also about staying active throughout the day. Consider your daily habits and think about how you can incorporate a bit more movement into your routine, such as:

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Use a bicycle instead of a car.
- Walk with friends instead of sitting in a café.
- Have standing or walking meetings.
- Walk around while talking on the phone.

Why Should You Stay Active?

Are you so tired that you can't manage even the smallest activity? Perhaps some of the benefits listed below can help motivate you. Research shows that increased movement alleviates several issues that are common in daily life for people with chronic conditions, such as pain and fatigue. Increased physical activity can lead to:

- Reduced fatigue
- Better sleep
- Fewer pains
- Increased energy
- Lower risk of other diseases
- Improved mood
- Better management of your condition

Whether you incorporate more movement into your daily routines or exercise regularly, the benefits of increased physical activity are evident. When you are physically active, you improve your blood circulation. Healthy blood circulation strengthens your immune system and increases your endurance. This means you will become less tired and experience fewer pains. In return, you gain more energy, and your mood improves.

Chapter 2

Diet and Hydration



» Diet and Hydration

Diet and Hydration.

Eat a healthy and varied diet. Follow the official dietary guidelines: eat fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and fish, and drink plenty of water.

Diet is especially important if you have a chronic condition. Some chronic diseases are associated with a higher risk of becoming overweight. It is also known that types of chronic diseases that cause inflammation, especially in the joints, can increase the risk of cardiovascular diseases. Therefore, it is a very good idea to ensure that you eat as healthily and varied as possible.

Eating a varied diet gives you the best chance to get the nutrients you need to stay healthy. You can use the official Mediterranean dietary guidelines to achieve a healthy balance in what you eat and drink:

- Eat a varied diet, not too much, and be physically active.
- Eat fruits and many vegetables.
- Eat more fish.
- Choose whole grains.
- Choose lean meats and cold cuts.
- Choose low-fat dairy products.
- Eat less saturated fat.
- Eat foods with less salt.
- Eat less sugar.
- Drink water.

Nausea

Nausea can be caused by pain, fatigue, constipation, surgery, or medical treatment. It can be very unpleasant, leaving you with little energy or desire to do anything. Nausea can cause you to lose your appetite, leading to weight loss that might not be healthy for you.

If you have problems with nausea, you should talk to your doctor about it. Once your doctor has determined the cause, they can assess how to reduce or eliminate your nausea.

There are also several things you can do yourself to manage or avoid nausea:

- Drink plenty of fluids between meals.
- Distract yourself with music, TV, reading, relaxation, or a walk in nature.
- Let others prepare your food, or cook when you have the energy and store it in the fridge or freezer.
- Ventilate well and avoid strong odors.
- Eat the foods you crave – for some, this means food without strong smells and flavors.
- Eat at times of the day when you feel your best, perhaps right after resting or sleeping.
- Eat small, frequent meals and avoid an empty stomach.
- Start your day with something light like crackers, toast, oatmeal, or a banana.
- Pay attention to what positively affects your nausea.

Chapter 3

Physical Activity



>> Physical Activity

Physical Activity

Regular exercise can help improve your energy levels. It doesn't have to be intense; daily walks or light exercises can make a big difference.

What Kind of Exercise and Physical Activity is Good for You?

Small changes in your daily routine that increase your level of movement are beneficial. Most people can manage taking the stairs instead of the elevator or incorporating short walking routines into their day. However, if you have the energy, regular exercise is preferable. To gain more energy, you need to expend energy. The more energy you use, the more you gain, as long as your body gets rest between activities.

Cardio and strength training provide you with energy and strength. You can improve your fitness and strength in numerous ways, even if you have a chronic condition and feel fatigued. Some people enjoy dancing, others prefer exercising in a warm water pool. Some engage in strength training at a fitness center, while others prefer yoga or simply taking a walk. The right form of exercise for you depends on what you enjoy, as exercise should be fun to ensure you stick with it.

How to Start Exercising

It's a good idea to talk to a physiotherapist before starting a new exercise regimen. A physiotherapist can advise you on suitable forms of exercise and sports. If you enjoy strength training, you might benefit from training with a physiotherapist, either in a group or individually. The physiotherapist can also help you work through your joints.

How to Maintain Your Motivation to light Exercise

Many people start exercising with enthusiasm but lose motivation after a short time. Fortunately, there are several strategies to maintain your motivation to exercise not just today or tomorrow, but also in a month or a year.

The most important factor is that it should be fun. People are more likely to repeat activities they enjoy. Many find it motivating to exercise with a partner who can either join in or cheer them on. You can also join group classes to combine exercise with social interaction.

Another motivational factor is setting specific goals for your exercise. Make a contract with yourself, outlining your exercise goals. These can include major goals like losing weight, gaining more energy, and building muscle, as well as small, concrete goals such as attending two exercise classes, strength training three times, or swimming a certain distance in the upcoming week.

When setting your weekly goals, you should also define an "if-then" plan. An "if-then" plan helps you reach your goals by providing a clear consequence if you don't meet your daily goal. For example, if you don't feel like going to the swimming pool today, you should take a walk instead. Or if you're too tired to go to the gym, you should at least put on your workout clothes.

You Can Do More

When you are physically active, you improve your blood circulation. Healthy blood circulation strengthens your immune system and increases your endurance. This means you will feel less tired and experience less pain. In return, you gain more energy, and your mood improves.

Sleep Better

You will still feel tired even if you become more active. Physical activity makes you tired, whether or not you have a chronic illness. The difference is that this fatigue will be a natural, physical tiredness. You will be tired because you have used your body more, so your body will need rest. This makes it easier to fall asleep and you are likely to sleep better at night.

There is a high risk of poor sleep if you suffer from fatigue. Studies show that about 60-65% of those who suffer from fatigue also sleep poorly. It is important to address your sleep problems, as lack of sleep at night will increase your fatigue during the day. Over time, sleep deprivation can weaken your immune system, making you more susceptible to infections and other illnesses.

Studies also show that sleep problems and fatigue contribute to a reduced quality of life and have negative consequences for your health and behavior.



Chapter 4

Sleep Better



» Sleep Habits

Sleep Habits

Ensure good sleep hygiene. Establish a regular sleep schedule and create a calm sleep environment to improve sleep quality. Poor sleep can exacerbate daytime fatigue.

How to Sleep Better

Fortunately, there are several things you can do to improve your sleep. The Knowledge Council for Prevention published a report in 2015 titled "Sleep and Health," which reviews scientific evidence on how to improve your sleep.

Their eight tips for better sleep are:

- Avoid caffeine before bedtime
- Avoid alcohol before bedtime
- Avoid large amounts of energy-rich and fatty foods before bedtime
- Ensure you are physically active during the day
- Keep your bedroom well-tempered; the optimal temperature for most people is 18-21 degrees Celsius
- Avoid noise over 30 decibels in the bedroom; consider using earplugs
- Avoid screen light (e.g., computers, mobile phones, tablets, and TVs) before bedtime; dim the light intensity on screens if possible
- Ensure your bedroom is dark; consider using an eye mask

By following these eight tips, you have a good foundation for sleeping well. If you still experience sleep problems, you should consult your nurse or doctor for further assistance.

Clearer Thinking

Activity also affects you mentally. Physical activity improves your cognitive abilities, making you better at learning, perceiving, and understanding.

Improved Mood

Fatigue also impacts your mood. When you are tired, you might not have the energy for the things that make you happy. However, you can better manage your fatigue if you understand it. When you know your fatigue well, it will take up less space in your life, giving you more energy for the activities that bring you joy. Do you know your fatigue? If not, read on.

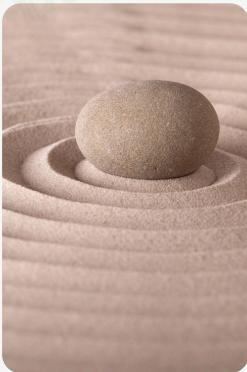
How to Understand Your Fatigue

Do you know what makes you tired? To understand your fatigue, it can be helpful to record how it manifests. Not just for a single day, but over a week or a longer period in a diary. You can use your calendar or note app on your mobile phone, create a spreadsheet, or simply write it down in a notebook. You can also use this document to keep a diary of your fatigue.

Recording how and when you feel tired throughout the day helps you understand your fatigue better. Additionally, a fatigue diary will be a valuable tool when discussing your condition with your nurse or doctor.

Chapter 5

Mental Relaxation



» Mental Relaxation

Mental Relaxation

Relaxation exercises, meditation, or simply taking time for relaxing activities such as listening to music or reading a book can help reduce mental fatigue.

Mindfulness exercises train your "mindfulness muscle" every time you notice your mind drifting into thoughts and tasks. When this happens, which it will repeatedly, gently bring your attention back to your breath or the guided exercise if you are listening to a mindfulness meditation.

Five Effective Relaxation Techniques:

- Decide to relax. Set an alarm 1-2 hours before bedtime to remind yourself not to engage in stimulating activities.
- Adjust your surroundings.
- Turn off screens or dim the light on screens.
- Choose relaxing activities such as listening to music or reading a book.
- Use a weighted blanket.

Meditation and Relaxation for Mental Well-being

Meditation and relaxation help you train your ability to relax and be present in the moment. This can enhance your mental well-being and energy, and it can help manage worries, stress, anxiety, and pain.

Sometimes it can be hard to focus on the exercise, especially if meditation is new to you. That's okay. When you notice your thoughts wandering, simply and gently bring your attention back to the exercise. When we understand the key principles of meditation and master the art of inner silence, we gain control over our own happiness. The power to end our suffering is in our own hands, to the extent that we can bring ourselves into a meditative state.

What is Meditation?

When we say "meditation," we can refer to either meditation techniques or the meditative state. The meditative state is the stillness of energy within us, which is our true nature, our highest self. It is a state of deep relaxation and freedom from suffering.

Meditation techniques are tools that help us experience the meditative state. There are many effective meditation techniques, such as breath meditation, guided meditation, walking meditation, sound meditation, mindfulness meditation, and mantra meditation.

How Does Meditation Work?

By using meditation techniques correctly, we can achieve the stillness of the meditative state. This is based on a fundamental truth: the stillness of energy within us occurs when our consciousness or inner focus is outside our thoughts, outside our mind.

Our mind is like a forest of thoughts, and when our consciousness is not attached to our thoughts, we are in the present moment. Meditation techniques are based on this truth. When our consciousness is not focused on thoughts, we are in the present. When we are in the present, stillness arises.

The Importance of Meditation

When thoughts lead to emotions, what are emotions? Emotions are really energy in motion. And this is the opposite of stillness, isn't it? It's the opposite of the meditative state. Think of a glass of water on a table. The water is very still. But if I tap the glass, the water begins to move – energy is in motion. Tapping the glass is like a thought. Each tap is a thought moving energy.

Meditation techniques are based on another truth: when our attention is focused on one point, we cannot think at the same time. This single point can be the breath – this is called breath meditation. You focus on the breath, your consciousness is on your breath. But as soon as you start thinking, you are no longer focused on your breath. When your attention is focused on one point, you cannot think at the same time. This is an important understanding. This is the second truth of meditation.

Meditation and Emotional Freedom

When our emotions begin to move, we can calm them. Movement is caused by an external event because the external event triggers thoughts. For example, if you lose your job, this will trigger thoughts like, "My God, I haven't applied for a job in 30 years." This sets off many, many thoughts. Emotions then follow these thoughts like a shadow, creating movement, which is the opposite of stillness.

We use meditation techniques to focus our attention on one point. When our thoughts do not arise, our energy remains still. It's like the water in the glass when I stop tapping it.

When we master this single-pointed concentration and maintain it for longer periods, we are literally free from emotional suffering. But anchoring your attention and keeping it there for a long time is not easy. If you can anchor your attention on one point for five uninterrupted minutes, a sense of freedom arises. This must be continuous, not shifting back to thoughts every minute. If you can maintain focus in meditation continuously for five minutes, you are free. You are free from suffering.

Meditation is Freedom from Suffering

When events trigger thoughts and emotions hit you, if you don't have another thought about it, the emotion will subside within two to three minutes. It's like if I tap the glass of water, it returns to its natural stillness in ten seconds.

So when emotions move within us and we anchor our attention to one point, it typically takes about two to three minutes for the energy to return to stillness. When we anchor our attention, we don't think, and the emotions subside into stillness, which is peace. You don't need to be able to anchor your attention for hours, just five uninterrupted minutes, but it's not easy. Because you might do it for a minute, then suddenly drift into thoughts for three seconds or two minutes, and come back. It's not easy, and sometimes you may feel like you can't meditate, but it takes practice to get good at it.

See it to Believe it

So what is meditation? The essence of meditation is:

- Continuously bringing your attention back to a single focal point. This could be the breath, the sound of a mantra, the object of your prayer, etc.
- When your attention is focused, you cannot think at the same time. When you are not thinking, you are in the present moment.
- When you are in the present moment, you can experience all the benefits of the natural state of stillness.

When we doubt these key truths about meditation, the effectiveness of meditation techniques collapses. For if you doubt these truths, what will you do? You will return to your mental gymnastics - you will think, "Oh, next time that person yells at me, I will say this...!" When your emotions are triggered, you will go to your headspace, which thinks. This is what everyone does. When a person has a problem, they try to analyze it, solve it, think it through. And then emotions follow thoughts like a shadow. They try to quiet their energy with thoughts, which will not work.

Practice Makes Perfect

To this point, your understanding of what meditation is and how it works is all based on trust. You trust what I say, or you don't! But believing what I say doesn't do anything. It is important to make this knowledge your own, your own truth. How do you do this? By taking a walk. When a situation arises in your life, and your emotions are triggered, use the techniques to focus. Then you will notice that the energy inside you becomes still, and you will think, "Oh, I like this! I know how to calm down."

Then you will begin to understand, "Oh, I see, this really works." When you come to that realization, you feel empowered. Whenever a situation causes you to think, and your energy moves, and you feel trapped in these emotions, all you need to do is focus. If you are not able to quiet your energy by focusing at that moment, it means you haven't practiced enough beforehand. It doesn't mean you can't meditate. You just haven't spent enough time yet building your muscles of focus and concentration. The solution is to train yourself today to prepare for tomorrow. How does a person win the Olympics? They don't train on the day of the Olympic tournament; they train for years in preparation. So that's what you need to do.

You need to train today to prepare for the future. We must train our minds by practicing meditation techniques, and then we will be able to control our thoughts and emotions at will. The more we build our concentration muscles, the more we will be able to control our thoughts, and the more we will have control over our own happiness.

Meditation is Not Outer Stillness

Meditation is about stillness of the mind, which is inner stillness. A stone can show outer stillness, but meditation is when the energy within you is still. You have no thoughts, and you are in the meditative state. Let's go back to the example of a glass of water. If you hold a glass of water and move it very gently without shaking it, the glass moves, but the actual water is very still. Similarly, we can have outer movements in our body - like walking or running - but we can have inner stillness.

Or we can have outer stillness when there is inner movement - you can be still on the outside, but inside your thoughts are moving. And as mentioned, thoughts are just energy, so when you think, it creates energy movement.

You can sit down and practice a meditation technique, and your body is very still. You are not going anywhere, you are not moving. But inside your mind could be racing. You are thinking about what to post on Facebook! You can't wait to comment on your friend's post. That is inner movement.

So the goal is to have inner stillness. And from that inner stillness, outer movement or outer non-movement is irrelevant. When you are not moving outside, when you are sitting still, there is beauty and grandeur and peace in that. And when you walk, there can be grace in it; when you talk, there can be grace in it - as long as there is stillness inside.

Summary

*T*he word "meditation" refers to both the meditative state and meditation techniques. The meditative state is a state of stillness and deep relaxation, which is our natural state, where we are free from emotional suffering.

Meditation techniques are tools that help us experience the meditative state. There are many effective meditation techniques, such as breath meditation, mantra meditation, guided meditation, walking meditation, sound meditation, and mindfulness meditation. We use meditation techniques to practice mastering our thoughts by continually bringing ourselves back to our meditative focal point. When we bring our focus to this point of concentration or the present moment, thoughts cannot arise at the same time. From this, you can see that the more you build your concentration muscles, the more you will be able to master your thoughts, and the more you will be able to have control over your own happiness.

When this is understood, the benefit of meditation techniques becomes quite clear – if you practice controlling or turning off your thoughts, then the corresponding negative emotions can be overcome. This means that the power to end your suffering is in your own hands, to the extent that you are able to master your thoughts.

Get to Know Your Fatigue

Keeping a diary can be helpful in identifying patterns in your fatigue. Note when and how you feel tired throughout the day, what activities trigger fatigue, and how different times of the day affect your energy. This can help you understand and manage your fatigue better, and provide valuable information for discussions with your doctor or nurse.

Conclusion

Managing fatigue, especially when it is related to a chronic condition, requires a multi-faceted approach. By understanding the different types of fatigue, integrating regular physical activity, maintaining a balanced diet, practicing good sleep hygiene, and incorporating mental relaxation techniques, you can significantly improve your quality of life.

Keeping a fatigue diary and utilizing resources like www.U-PICC.org can provide you with valuable insights and tools to better manage your energy levels. Remember, it is essential to communicate openly with your healthcare team about your fatigue and any challenges you face. They are there to support you and can offer personalized advice and treatments tailored to your specific needs.

By implementing the strategies discussed in this eBook, you can take proactive steps to reduce the impact of fatigue on your daily life. Remember, small changes can lead to significant improvements over time. Be patient with yourself, and celebrate the progress you make.

Thank you for taking the time to read this eBook. We hope you have found it informative and empowering. Here's to a future with more energy and a better quality of life.

Resources and Downloads

For additional resources, visit www.U-PICC.org, where you can find diary templates and other materials to help you manage your fatigue. You can also find information on how to prepare for consultations with healthcare professionals, so you can effectively describe and get help for your fatigue. These strategies and resources can help you gain a better understanding of fatigue and how to reduce its impact on your daily life.



Fatigue: An Introduction

Are you feeling perpetually exhausted, both physically and mentally, despite getting enough rest? Do you struggle with chronic fatigue that impacts your daily life? You're not alone. "Fatigue: An Introduction" delves deep into understanding and managing this debilitating condition, often experienced alongside chronic illnesses like arthritis.

Discover the Types of Fatigue:

Explore the five categories of disease-related fatigue—general, physical, mental, reduced activity, and reduced motivation—and learn how to identify which type affects you the most.

Practical Strategies for Relief:

Gain valuable insights on how to alleviate fatigue through practical lifestyle changes. From the importance of physical activity and balanced nutrition to effective sleep hygiene and mental relaxation techniques, this book offers a comprehensive guide to reclaiming your energy.

Real-Life Applications:

Understand the significance of tracking your fatigue patterns with a diary, and how this can assist in conversations with healthcare professionals to tailor your treatment.

Empower Your Journey:

With clear, actionable advice and supportive resources, "Fatigue: An Introduction" empowers you to take control of your fatigue and improve your quality of life.

Visit www.piccunited.org for additional resources, templates, and information on managing fatigue effectively.

About the Author:

PiCC United is dedicated to providing comprehensive resources and support for individuals dealing with chronic health issues. With a focus on patient education and empowerment, PiCC United aims to enhance the quality of life for those affected by chronic fatigue and related conditions.

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Take the first step towards a more energized life with "Fatigue: An Introduction."



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