



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Fatigue

*Do you
feel
drained
of
energy
since
your
brain
injury?*

What does this mean?

After a brain injury, it is common to have fatigue. Fatigue is a feeling of exhaustion, tiredness, weariness or lack of energy. After a traumatic brain injury (TBI), you may have more than one kind of fatigue.

How might a brain injury cause fatigue?

Fatigue is one of the most common problems people have after a TBI. As many as 70% of survivors of TBI complain of fatigue after physical, mental or emotional exertion. You might experience an overwhelming tiredness that impairs your daily functioning (i.e., working full-time, driving, etc.) and feel mentally “drained” after just a short period of time when working on a task or dealing with a situation. Things that you used to be able to do without getting tired may now be exhausting after only a short time.

Common examples of fatigue:

- ◆ “After a while, I just can’t concentrate anymore.”
- ◆ “It’s hard to stay focused.”
- ◆ “My mind just goes blank.”
- ◆ “I just get so tired doing even simple things now.”
- ◆ “I never had to take naps before.”

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ Make a list of things that need to be done and when. List them in order of what should be done first. Break down activities into smaller steps.
- ◆ Improve your time management. Take frequent breaks.
- ◆ Figuring out what steps you need to do first to complete an activity. Think of the end goal and work backwards.
- ◆ Do the more complicated or difficult tasks early in the day when you have the most energy and are mentally alert.
- ◆ Pay attention to what triggers your fatigue.
- ◆ Get more sleep and rest.
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids and keep good nutrition.
- ◆ Set and keep a regular schedule.
- ◆ Alcohol and marijuana will generally make fatigue worse—avoid these substances.
- ◆ Caffeine (coffee, cola products) should be avoided after lunch if sleeping is a problem.
- ◆ Resume activities gradually; start with familiar tasks at home or work.
- ◆ Exercise daily.
- ◆ Talk to your doctor regarding possible medication recommendations if your fatigue does not improve.

Sources: IU School of Medicine / Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana TBI Model Systems. Further, the information in this FACT SHEET is also based on a consensus of expert opinion of the Rehabilitation Hospital of Indiana Departments of Neuropsychology and Resource Facilitation.

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatments.

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