



Fatigue is a feeling of tiredness or lack of energy and is one of the most common effects of stroke.

The signs of fatigue are not always obvious but it can have a significant impact on the person's ability to function day to day and participate in activities.

What you should know

- ✓ Fatigue after stroke:
 - Can affect up to half of persons with stroke but is manageable when using a team approach
 - Often starts in the first few weeks after a stroke but can happen at any point
 - Is different from the typical tiredness that everyone feels from time to time. After a stroke, even tasks like moving, thinking, talking – can take more effort than it did before
 - Is not necessarily related to activity, does not always improve with rest and the person may constantly feel exhausted
 - May affect a person's quality of life and relationships, as family and friends may not understand how genuinely exhausted the person is
 - Can be mistaken for depression. However, it is important to know that fatigue and depression are different, and each problem needs to be recognized and managed separately (See Smart Tips for Stroke Care - Depression After Stroke)
- ✓ The intensity of fatigue does not seem to be related to the type or severity of the stroke. A person with a very mild stroke can experience fatigue
- ✓ Other factors can have an impact on fatigue after stroke. These include:
 - Noisy or busy environments
 - Complex activities such as social events, bingo, etc.
 - Poor sleep or breathing problems while asleep (e.g. sleep apnea)
 - Poor nutrition
 - Pain
 - Some medications
 - Other medical conditions (e.g. thyroid problems)

Smart Tips - Always follow the care plan!

Encourage & Support



- Encourage good communication by asking the person about their level of fatigue before, during and after an activity
- Encourage participation in activities the person enjoys, even if only partially or for a short time

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Promote Healthy Habits



- Adequate sleep (keep a regular sleep schedule)
- Nutrition (e.g. eat a healthy diet, drink enough water and avoid alcohol)
- Exercise (even small amounts can help improve fatigue over time)

Plan Ahead



- Have the person identify which activities are the most important to them, and plan to complete those activities first
- Help the person to do tasks in a way that uses less energy, such as sitting when possible
- Organize the environment to make tasks easier, such as having the necessary items close by
- Plan activities for when the person will have the most energy. Balance periods of activity with periods of rest. Plan extra time to accomplish a task
- Do not push the person to do too much if they are having a 'better day'. This may leave them exhausted for the next day or two
- Recognize that everyone's level of fatigue will be different and that fatigue can be unpredictable

Celebrate Success



- Observe the person's progress over time and highlight the success they have had in using strategies to manage their fatigue
- Remind them of what they can do instead of focusing on what they cannot do

Seek extra support

- ✓ Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists can help with strategies to manage fatigue. It may be helpful to involve them in a person's care
- ✓ Tell the team if you notice a change in a person's fatigue level and seek medical advice for any conditions that may be contributing to fatigue