

Fatigue: Feeling Very Tired

What is fatigue?

Fatigue is hard to describe because it affects people in different ways. Some people call it feeling tired, worn out or drained. Others call it a lack of energy. Often, no one can tell how tired you are.



What causes it?

Fatigue can be caused by many things.

- Illness from viruses or bacteria such as mononucleosis.
- A chronic illness such as cancer, anemia, depression or low thyroid.
- Not sleeping enough or irregular sleeping patterns.
- Poor eating habits. Not eating the right foods or eating too many junk foods.
- School with or without after school activities.
- Work.
- Medicines such as some antihistamines or antidepressants.

How does fatigue affect me?

- You may sleep more and have a hard time getting up in the morning.
- You may not want to do your normal activities.
- You may be tired during class. This can affect your grades at school.
- You may be crabby and not as patient.
- Some people feel sad or down when they are tired.

How is it diagnosed?

Talk to your doctor. Tell the doctor how you feel or what things are hard for you to do. Your parents may know when you are tired and can give examples also.

Your doctor will do an exam. Your height and weight will be checked. Your doctor will ask questions about your sleep, eating, activities and feelings. Blood tests may be done to check for infections, like mononucleosis or other illnesses such as low thyroid and anemia. Other tests may also be ordered by the doctor.



How is it treated?

Treatment is based on the cause of your fatigue. The doctor will go over any test results or changes on your exam.

- Your diet or sleeping patterns may need to be changed.
- You may need to get more rest and have a regular sleep routine.
- You may need to cut back on some activities. You may need to limit TV, telephone and computer use before bedtime.
- Changing the time that medicines are taken can also be helpful. Medicines that tend to make you sleepy are best to take at night.

Other helpful resources:

Check these websites and search under fatigue:

- www.emedicinehealth.com
- www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus

ALERT: Call your doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if you have special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to provide you with additional information about your child's care. Diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up should be provided by your health care professional.