



The EAP
is a **free** service
for you and your
eligible family members.

All EAP services are
**completely
confidential.**

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Fatigue

Fatigue is an overwhelming sense of tiredness and lack of energy that makes your body feel weak. Everyone has felt it at some time or another. It's a normal part of life. What most people refer to as fatigue is brought on by excessive stress, poor nutrition, hard work, lack of sleep or exertion, and will go away with good nutrition, reduction of stress, rest and adequate sleep. When these do not help, though, your body is sending you a signal that something else may be wrong.

Causes

Depression and anxiety are common, treatable causes of fatigue. Symptoms of these disorders may include a depressed mood, feelings of apprehension, eating or sleeping disturbances, or not being able to enjoy life.

Fatigue is common up to one month after a viral illness. People often return to their busy lifestyles after the obvious symptoms go away and do not realize their body is still recuperating.

Fatigue can be an early symptom of many types of serious illness, although usually it's not. These illnesses include cancer, diabetes and other metabolic problems, anemia, hepatitis, heart disease, obesity, hypoglycemia, hypothyroidism, mononucleosis, sleep disorders, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases, alcoholism and urinary tract infections.

Fatigue can sometimes be caused by prescriptions or other medications you are taking. Over-the-counter medications that can rob you of energy include pain relievers, cough and cold medicines, antihistamines and allergy medicines, sleeping pills and motion sickness pills. Prescriptions that can cause fatigue include tranquilizers, muscle relaxants, sedatives, birth control pills and blood pressure reducers.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

A pattern of extreme fatigue not relieved by rest that lasts for six or more months can be a sign of a disabling condition known as chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). This condition affects more women than men. The onset of CFS often follows a viral illness, but the cause of



CFS is unknown. If all other reasons for fatigue are eliminated, then chronic fatigue syndrome might be the cause.

Symptoms of CFS

In addition to fatigue, these are possible symptoms of CFS:

- Loss of short-term memory or concentration
- Sore throat
- Tender lymph nodes in the neck and armpits
- Unexplained muscle pain
- Pain in multiple joints without swelling or redness
- Headaches of a new type, pattern or severity
- Sleep problems
- Extreme exhaustion lasting more than 24 hours after normal exercise or activity

CFS can be difficult to diagnose because it has the same symptoms as many other diseases. First, your doctor needs to rule out other possible conditions. Then you need to meet the criteria for a CFS diagnosis, which include having severe chronic fatigue for six months or longer with no known medical cause and having at least four of the eight symptoms above.

Depression often goes hand in hand with CFS. In fact, more than two-thirds of people who have CFS also have depression.

Treatment of CFS

There is no effective treatment for CFS, but treating your symptoms can help you feel

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better. Your doctor may prescribe medications for pain or depression if needed. A rehabilitation medicine specialist can evaluate you and teach you how to plan activities to take advantage of times when you usually feel better. Emotional support and counseling may also help you cope with CFS.

Self-Care Steps for Fatigue

- Organize your time. Get up a few minutes earlier, so you won't have to start your day feeling rushed and tired. Learn to delegate and say no when you have enough responsibilities and activities in your life.
- Be physically active. Try to get at least 30 minutes of activity most days of the week. Avoid exercising right before you go to bed, which can disrupt your regular sleeping habits and make you tired in the morning.
- Get the right amount of sleep. Most people need six to eight hours of sleep each night.
- Take a nap during the day. This may be especially helpful for teenagers who have hectic schedules and older adults who tend to sleep less soundly.
- Quit smoking. Smoking steals some of your body's oxygen supply, replacing oxygen absorbed by the red blood cells with carbon monoxide. Nicotine is a stimulant, and going through the withdrawal symptoms that follow smoking can cause temporary tiredness.
- Drink less caffeine and alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant and will make you feel tired, not boost your energy. Caffeine will give you a temporary boost of energy, but when the effect wears off, your energy level will drop drastically.
- Find your lunch style. Some people function best after eating a lighter lunch, whereas others need to eat their largest meal of the day at lunch. In either case, avoid high-fat foods. Because fats burn off slower than carbohydrates, they will slow you down.
- Take breaks. Interrupt your workday with occasional breaks. If you haven't gone on a vacation in a while, take a trip or unplug the phone and refresh yourself at home.
- Watch less television. If you depend on television to relax, you may find yourself relaxed into a state of sluggishness. Try something more stimulating, such as reading or taking a walk.
- Find ways to calm yourself. Listen to music or relaxation tapes. Say a word, phrase, or prayer that gives you a sense of peace. Imagine yourself on a beach, at the mountains, or in your favorite spot.

Self-Care Steps for CFS

- Eat a balanced diet, don't smoke and limit your caffeine intake.
- Get enough sleep.
- Pace yourself physically, emotionally and intellectually. Too much stress can aggravate your symptoms.
- Exercise regularly, but don't overdo it. At first, physical activity may increase your fatigue, but over time it can improve your symptoms.
- If you have continuing fatigue without obvious cause, see your doctor.

Decision Guide for Fatigue:

Symptoms

Action

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Fatigue that is better after the weekends or vacations | Use self-care |
| Recent viral illness or fever | Use self-care |
| Fatigue that may be caused by medication | Call provider's office |
| Fatigue that does not improve with self-care | See provider |
| Pattern of extreme fatigue | See provider |

Krames Staywell

Among the Missing: Vitamin D

Just when you thought you had your summertime outdoors routine down -- plenty of sunscreen, a large hat, limited exposure between 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. -- comes the news that Americans aren't getting enough of the "sunshine vitamin" -- vitamin D.

A recent study reported in the *New England Journal of Medicine* found that vitamin D deficiency was a "substantial problem" among Americans. Vitamin D is essential to help your body absorb and use calcium. Vitamin D works with calcium and magnesium to help build strong bones and

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How to Stay Healthy Aloft

While the thought of flying gives some people white knuckles, commercial airliners are actually much safer than cars, bicycles or even your own home.

But being airborne involves more potential health considerations than you might think. Veteran fliers and medical experts know some tips to prevent these conditions.

An open ear

Depending on how high you're flying, a typical airline cabin is pressurized to the equivalent altitude of 6,000 to 8,000 feet above sea level. Ascending usually causes no problems, but some people can experience pain during descent if their middle ear doesn't readjust to the increasing pressure.

Yawning or swallowing can help ease the pain; so can chewing gum. Or try this: inhale, close your mouth and pinch your nostrils shut, then gently push the breath from your lungs up toward the back of your throat and nose. This will force air up into the eustachian tube and equalize the pressure in your ears.

But what if you're seriously congested beforehand? Stuart R. Rose, M.D., the Northampton, Mass., author of the recent *International Travel HealthGuide*, suggests asking your doctor about postponing your trip if you are suffering from an acute ear infection, heavy cold, sinusitis, hay fever or an upper respiratory infection.

He recommends the following strategies:

- If you have nasal congestion due to allergies, ask your doctor to prescribe a cortisone-type nasal spray and/or a non-sedating antihistamine.
- If you're congested from a cold, take a decongestant two hours before departure.
- Use a nasal decongestant two hours before landing, and blow your nose frequently to remove mucus.

Economy Class syndrome

It's hard to enjoy sitting in a cramped position in economy class for several hours. For most passengers, all this means is slight discomfort, or maybe a few pins and needles. But for a few, sitting like this can cause venous stasis or deep vein thrombosis (DVT), the settling of blood or actual clot formation in the veins of your legs. Although often associated with economy class, DVT may occur in persons in

first class or in any transportation where the person sits for a protracted period.

A more serious complication of DVT is a pulmonary embolus (PE). This is a clot that moves from the legs to the lungs and may cause mild to serious or fatal consequences. The longer a person sits without moving the higher the risk of developing DVT and subsequently "throwing" a PE. Flights over 12 hours have the greatest risk while DVT is uncommon in flights under four hours. Other risk factors include increasing age (age over 50), overweight or obesity, a previous history of PE, cardiovascular disease, cancer, oral contraceptive use or pregnancy, recent surgery and dehydration. Moving the legs frequently, jiggling the feet, stretching the calves by flexing the foot up toward the shin and getting up frequently and walking up and down the aisle improve blood flow in the legs. Preventing dehydration is important. Always maintain adequate hydration while traveling.

Don't lag behind because of jet lag

While jet lag has a widespread reputation, it occurs only on certain types of flights and in certain sets of circumstances. Among the symptoms: daytime fatigue and the inability to sleep at night, gastrointestinal distress, tired muscles, headaches, moodiness, and general malaise. Other factors contributing to jet lag include travel stress, sleep deprivation and fatigue.

But the primary cause of jet lag is the disruption of our circadian rhythms - the internal clocks on which our bodies run - caused by travel either east or west across multiple time zones. Body temperature, hormone releases, eating and sleep-wake cycles all operate on circadian (circle the day) rhythms. They are controlled by both internal clocks and external clocks, such as sunlight and social cues.

Traveling across time zones throws these internal and external clocks out of synch and jet lag results. Your internal rhythms adjust easier when you travel west across time zones, which tends to lengthen your day. That's because without exterior cues (clocks, daylight), our bodies would run on a 25-hour clock, studies have shown. Eastward travel shortens the day well below that 25-hour cycle.

While researchers investigate ways of combating jet lag, including bright light treatments and pills containing hormones to adjust internal clocks, medical experts

advocate a common sense approach. The most basic advice: When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Tips to avoid jet lag

Before you leave:

- If possible, try to get your body on your destination time schedule.
- Get plenty of sleep; don't stay up late packing the night before.
- Light: If you travel westward across several time zones, try to get three hours of outdoor light the afternoon you arrive in order to extend your biological clock. If you travel eastward several time zones, get early morning light as soon as possible in order to tell your body it should be waking up earlier. If you travel more than six time zones, however, take mid-day light instead.
- If you have trouble sleeping, experts recommend taking a short-acting sleeping pill - but only for the first few days. Ask your physician's advice on this.
- By the day after your arrival, begin eating and sleeping on local time.

Do drink the water

Dehydration certainly plays a role in jet lag. Blame the air you breathe inside the airplane. The high-altitude air pulled in through jet engines is extremely dry; relative humidity aloft is as low as 5 percent to 10 percent, and not higher than 25 percent.

So, to prevent dehydration, experts advise:

- Drink extra liquids shortly before you depart.
- While in-flight, avoid alcoholic beverages. Alcohol is a diuretic that promotes dehydration.
- Don't drink too much coffee; it also promotes dehydration. Also, excess caffeine can cause over stimulation, nervousness, tremors and anxiety.
- Limit fruit juices or soft drinks. They contain too much sugar and/or caffeine, experts say. Grapefruit juice and excess sugar are also diuretics.
- Do drink plenty of water. Try for a liter or more for a six or seven-hour flight, in addition to what you drink with your meals.
- After you arrive at your destination, continue to drink extra liquids.

Krames Staywell

(Vitamin D... Continued from Page 2)

teeth. What's a person to do? Stay in the sun and risk skin cancer? Stay out of the sun and risk weak bones?

The decision isn't all that difficult, says Connie Pepe, outpatient dietitian at Jefferson Health System. For adequate sunshine to help your body make vitamin D, you only need to expose your face, hands and arms 10 to 15 minutes sometime between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. two to three times a week. The sunshine stimulates a hormone in your body to manufacture vitamin D.

Unfortunately, even if you spend the right amount of time outdoors, you can't always get enough sunshine. In many parts of the country, the sun doesn't shine intensely enough in the winter months to help our bodies make vitamin D.

Cloud cover, air pollution, altitude and a person's skin color also affect the amount of sunshine available to the body. Sunscreens can block the amount of sunshine reaching the skin, as well.

Older adults also have problems making enough vitamin D, Pepe says, because older skin is less efficient at using the sunshine. In fact, elderly Americans are the most at risk for vitamin D deficiency because of that, and because they also don't eat enough foods that contain vitamin D and take medications that interfere with the body's manufacture of the vitamin.

The current guidelines for daily vitamin D intake are 200 International Units (IU) for people 19 to 50, 400 IU for those 51 to 70, and 600 IU for those 71 and older.

Other than the sun, the best way to get vitamin D is by drinking milk or certain cereals, such as Total, which have been fortified with the vitamin. One cup of fortified milk contains 100 IU; other foods such as eggs, fatty fish and liver contain some vitamin D, but they are also high in cholesterol or fat. One serving of a fortified cereal can provide the full daily requirement for vitamin D, Pepe says.

For some people, particularly the elderly, a vitamin supplement may be necessary, but Pepe warns that any supplement should be monitored closely by a physician. Too much vitamin D can be toxic.

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How to Use Your EAP

When help is needed call 800-433-2320. The intake counselor will ask for your name, employer and a brief description of your presenting concern. If an emergency exists you will be given immediate assistance. If your situation is not an emergency, you will be offered telephone assistance and/or in-person sessions to complete an assessment and make a referral for treatment if needed.

Meetings with your counselor are completely confidential. Your employer will not know you have used the EAP. No one will be provided any information about you without your written consent. Exceptions would occur only in the event of you being considered dangerous to yourself or someone else.

At the first appointment you should be prepared to give the counselor some background information to assist in formulating an action plan. Many people find it helpful to prepare a list of things they wish to discuss at each session.

For Assistance Call: 800-433-2320

Or Text: 503-980-1777

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