

## **Fatigue**

### **What is fatigue?**

Fatigue is the feeling of extreme tiredness or weakness that can make it difficult for you to perform ordinary tasks. Fatigue affects everyone differently. You may feel very tired and all you want to do is sleep. Fatigue may also come along with pain and sometimes can make you feel that you have little control over your life. Chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) is a long-term fatigue that may occur with other symptoms, such as recurrent sore throats, muscle pain, multi-joint pain, tender lymph nodes, new patterns of headaches, and complaints such as impaired memory or concentration.

### **What causes fatigue?**

You may have physical fatigue as the result of a long day of hard work or a hectic schedule. In contrast, emotional fatigue is usually more striking in the morning and less draining as the day progresses.

#### ***Some causes of physical fatigue are:***

- Not getting enough sleep
- Chronic disease and other health problems
- Poor physical condition, lack of exercise
- Obesity
- Environmental causes, which can cause stress such as extremes in temperature or dealing with traffic and long waits.
- Side effects of certain over-the-counter medications such as antihistamines or prescription drugs such as blood pressure medications.

#### ***Some causes of emotional fatigue include:***

- Depression or anxiety
- Overextending yourself or trying to hide your emotions from others
- A major life change
- Workplace stress

### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your doctor will review your symptoms and ask about your daily routine, work habits, and environmental conditions. He or she will give you a physical exam and may want you to have basic blood tests to rule out diseases that may cause fatigue. If you are under a lot of emotional stress or experience recurrent anxiety or depression, your doctor may diagnose fatigue caused by psychological disturbances.

### **How can I prevent fatigue?**

- Allow yourself more time to sleep or rest, particularly if you are working longer hours or doing more physical work.
- If you are overweight, begin a weight loss program after a physical exam by your doctor.
- Walk or exercise regularly 3 or 4 times a week for at least 30 minutes
- Take vitamin and mineral supplements as recommended by your health care provider.

- Consider eating a well-balanced diet in 6 smaller meals daily to maintain a higher energy level. Include more complex carbohydrates such as rice and pasta, and reduce fat intake. Avoid foods containing sugar, caffeine, and alcohol.
- Stop smoking.

**How can I take care of myself?**

- See a counselor to learn how to express your feelings.
- Learn to use deep breathing techniques, visualization, and meditation to relieve stress.
- Take up a new hobby or creative project.
- Make changes in your daily routine to allow more free time to enjoy things you like to do.