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Useful Advice for Managing Fatigue

Children and Young People's Services (Cambridgeshire)

If you require this information in a different format such as in large print or on audio tape, or in a different language please contact the service on the details above.

If you have any compliments about this service or suggestions for improvements, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0300 131 1000 (charges may apply depending on your network) or email: ccs-tr.pals@nhs.net.

For free, confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day, 365 days a year please contact NHS 111.



This leaflet provides some information and ideas that are worth exploring to help you manage your fatigue levels and encourage you to participate in your usual daily activities.

Sleep Hygiene:

Sleep hygiene is the term used to describe good sleeping habits; they are things you can do to make sure you have the best chance of a good refreshing sleep.



Strategies to help you sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
- Do regular daily exercise however little this is e.g. walks, going outdoors.
- Try to avoid stimulating activities before bed such as computer games, exercise.
- Instead try and find a relaxing routine before bed such as taking a hot bath or practicing meditation.
- Rather than watching the clock when you can't sleep try activities such as listening to music and podcasts or reading.
- Spend some time outside for natural bright light each day.
- Try to only use your bed for sleep. You could get a bean bag in your room to rest on instead when you are awake.
- Take medication as directed by your doctor if applicable.
- Avoid light screens for 1-2 hours prior to bed e.g. TV, phone, computers.
- Try to ensure you are not too hungry or too full when going to bed and avoid caffeine containing drinks in the evening.
- If you are tired during the day aim to do relaxing, low level activities to avoid napping.
- Remember that things always seem worse at night, if you cannot sleep try not to worry.

Mood:

Always feeling fatigued can impact on your mood and anxiety levels. When you are low in mood it can make you feel more fatigued.

Below are websites that provide counselling sessions in this area.

<https://theymca.org.uk/counselling/>

<http://centre33.org.uk/>

Other useful information:

Although your energy levels are low it is important you participate in activities that allow you to do things you enjoy in life. Below are some helpful websites that give you information on what is available locally as well as online support:

<http://www.keep-your-head.com/CP-MHS/who-else-can-help-me/further-support> - mental health support in Cambridgeshire including online services and activity groups.

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/mildmoderate/entry.asp> - advice for managing your mood.

<http://youthoria.org/> - general information for education and support.

<https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-&-learning/family-learning-activities/> - activities for the family.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk/docs/leaflets/PI-115-Achievingbetter-sleep.pdf>

Activity Management:

Sometimes people's energy levels vary. It is normal to feel more fatigued following lots of exercise. This may mean you need to find your baseline first, which is an activity level you can manage every day. Then you can steadily progress up from this level, this is called effective pacing.

It is important you don't enter a **BOOM AND BUST** cycle where you do too much followed by too little.



You should:

- Aim to be regularly active e.g. set a target step count for the day.
- Aim to slowly progress your activities from your baseline e.g. couch to 5km programmes.
- Do something you enjoy every day.

Eating and Drinking Well:

Your body needs a balance of healthy food to ensure maximum energy, best health and aid recovery.

It is also important to remain hydrated by drinking water regularly throughout the day. However, do avoid drinking a lot of fluid before bedtime so your sleep is not disturbed by trips to the toilet.



A **balanced diet** means eating a variety of food from each group:

- Bread, cereal, pasta, potato and rice (eat one portion per meal).
- Fruit and vegetables (aim for 5 or more a day).
- Meat, fish or alternatives e.g. eggs, nuts, seeds, quinoa, beans, chickpeas and peas.
- Milk products.

What to eat: Slow release or low glycaemic index foods can help sustain your energy levels for longer e.g. wholegrain cereals, pasta, yoghurt and fruit.

Sugary drinks and high-sugar foods cause Fast-releasing energy which then later causes a slump and therefore should be avoided.

When to eat: Regular and frequent smaller meals can help. Eating little and often and dry food as pre prepared snacks can sometimes help with feeling sick (nauseous). Having smoothies and soups can also be helpful.

More information and food suggestions can be found at:

<https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/cfs-meanddiet.pdf>

Pain:

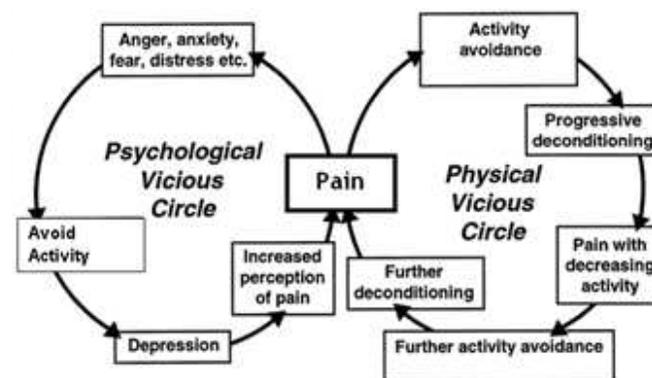
Fatigue can have an impact on pain and pain can have an impact on fatigue.

When you are fatigued, pain can be heightened.

Pain has an impact on:

- **Activity levels** - pain can reduce your activity levels which can lead to deconditioning/weakness. Then activity can be more painful due to the deconditioning/weakness.
- **Mood** - low mood can make the feeling of pain heightened and impact on your motivation to be active.
- **Sleep** - pain can cause you to not sleep which can then cause an increase in pain. You may notice you ache more in the evening following an active day, indicating the need to pace activity.

It is important to understand the impact of pain on your life and to avoid entering the vicious cycle. Taking pain relief with guidance from your Doctor and keeping active will help you manage your pain. Meditation, distraction techniques and heat can also help.



More information can be found at: <https://www.paintoolkit.org/>