

Feeling fatigued?

In the UK, 10-20% of the population report being tired for a month or longer, with 1.5% feeling a need to see their GP. The symptoms often include difficulty sleeping; muscle or joint pain; headaches; painful lymph nodes; sore throat; cognitive dysfunction; symptoms made worse by physical or mental exertion; flu-like symptoms; dizziness; nausea; or palpitations.

Is it normal to feel fatigued with psoriatic disease?

It is normal to feel tired after exertion, insufficient sleep, or at the end of the day; this tiredness is usually relieved by rest or sleep. With fatigue, the symptoms often go beyond normal tiredness and can include decreased or lack of energy with accompanying physical or mental exhaustion. These symptoms usually persist even after a good night's sleep.

What causes fatigue?

As described above, inflammation appears to be part of the process of feeling fatigued, but researchers do not know exactly what the link is, or how increased levels of inflammatory substances in the body influence fatigue.

Myths and misconceptions

There are many myths and misconceptions about fatigue. People are sometimes wrongly viewed as being "lazy" by their work colleagues and sometimes by their family members.

The reason that the person affected by fatigue is unable to carry out basic everyday tasks is the inflammatory process taking place in their body. People often think that caffeine will help wake them up. As caffeine is a stimulant, the effects are short-lived; people often feel more tired once the initial effect wears off. Caffeine is typically found in coffee, tea, cola, and energy drinks. Caffeine is also a diuretic, causing dehydration, which will also have a negative effect. In some instances, people may resort to the use of alcohol, under the misapprehension that it will relieve the symptoms. However, alcohol is likely to make people drowsier

and depressed and can affect sleep, which will also contribute to fatigue.

What can I do?

If you feel tired all the time, tell your healthcare provider, as it is important to rule out any other causes of fatigue. Sometimes you may need to have your medication changed or take tests so that what is happening can be fully understood.

With or without medical intervention, several lifestyle changes may help you feel generally less exhausted.

Dietary advice

- Eat a diet providing at least five servings of fresh fruit or vegetables a day
- Reduce the animal fats in your diet and avoid fatty foods as much as possible
- Eat fresh, home-made foods rather than prepackaged convenience foods
- Increase your intake of B-group vitamins, needed for the production of energy in the body. These are found in brown rice, whole



grain bread and cereals, oatmeal and oat flakes, pulses, green leafy vegetables, oily fish and poultry

- Aim to eat more oily fish, virgin olive oil or rapeseed oil, nuts and seeds
- If you are unable to increase your intake of fish, consider taking an omega-3 fish oil supplement
- Cut back on saturated spreads and vegetable oils and products that contain them, such as shop-bought biscuits and cakes
- Consider taking a vitamin and mineral supplement supplying around 100% of the recommended daily amount for as many nutrients as possible.

Behavioural changes

- Avoid things that interfere with sleep, such as caffeine, nicotine, excessive alcohol, and eating rich, heavy food late at night
- Avoid excess stress
- Aim to lose excess weight
- Put yourself first
- Take some time to rest during the day
- Keep a balance between the demands on you and your energy
- Learn to say no, if possible
- Tell people when you are tired
- Avoid using unnecessary energy.

Physical activity

Some people find it difficult to get motivated and take part in some form of physical activity. As everyone has different activity levels, pain thresholds, and body weight, you should start by finding activities that keep you mobile and strengthen your muscles, but which do not cause you any pain. Try to think of a physical activity that you enjoy that you can easily fit into your daily



routine. If you enjoy walking, try to go for a walk a few times a week and increase the walking time by a minute or so per session. After a few weeks, you will have learned how far you can comfortably manage without experiencing pain. Other activities you may find beneficial are cycling, gentle gym exercises, or more complementary therapies such as yoga or pilates. See our leaflet *Physiotherapy and Exercise: Psoriatic Arthritis* for more detail.

Balancing energy

- Try to keep back some energy for something you like to do; it will give you satisfaction and a morale boost
- Use pain relief regularly and as directed, as constant pain will make you fatigued
- Take regular, gentle exercise
- Take a rest before the children arrive home from school or if you are having visitors, as this will help you to spend more time with them

