

Mental Disorders in Primary Care

Chronic Tiredness

Common symptoms

Compared with previous level of energy
and as compared to people known to you

Tired all the time

Tire easily

Tired despite rest



- Disruptive to work, social and family life
- Affects ability to carry out routine and other tasks
- Feelings of frustration

Common triggers

Psychological triggers

- Depression
- Stress
- Worry
- Anxiety
- Doing too much activity
- Doing too little activity

Physical triggers

Medical problems

- anemia
- bronchitis
- asthma
- diabetes
- arthritis
- Thyroid disorder
- influenza
- alcohol/drug use
- bacterial, viral and other infections

Medications

- steroids
- antihistamines

What treatments can help?

Both therapies may be needed



Supportive therapy for:

- depression
- worry/ anxiety
- stress/ life problems
- lifestyle change
- level of physical activity

Medication:

- for other mental or physical disorders
- antidepressants are sometimes useful
- there are no effective medications specific to fatigue

Behavioral strategies

- Examine how well you are sleeping
- Have a brief rest period of about 2 weeks, in which there are no extensive activities
- After the period of brief rest, gradually return to your usual activities
- Plan pleasant and enjoyable activities into your week
- Gradually build up a regular exercise routine
- Do not push yourself too hard, remember to build up all activities gradually and steadily
- Try to have regular meals during the day
- Try to keep to a healthy diet
- Use relaxation techniques, for example, slow breathing

Slow breathing for relaxation

- Breath in for 3 seconds
- Breath out for 3 seconds
- Pause for 3 seconds before breathing in again
- Practice for 10 minutes at night (5 minutes is better than nothing)

Increasing level of physical activity:

A little activity
1 or 2 times a week
e.g. walking



Inactive

Daily activities -
not much effort,
e.g., fast walking,
shopping, cleaning



Some activity

Activity that makes
you out of breath for
20 minutes or more,
3-5 times a week
e.g. jogging



Active

Chronic tiredness

Chronic tiredness can be overcome

Chronic tiredness is one of the most *common* symptoms reported to doctors. It is psychologically very *distressing* since it can be misinterpreted by family, friends and co-workers. It can affect a person's life in a very *negative way*.

What is tiredness?

Tiredness can be felt in different ways. For example:

- feeling tired all the time
- getting easily tired while performing everyday tasks
- finding it difficult to recover from being tired, despite rest

There are times when everyone feels tired. However, feeling tired for most people is temporary and in most cases the cause can be identified quite easily.

Tiredness becomes a problem when:

- it goes on for too long
- you cannot figure out the cause
- it interferes with your day-to-day activities

Causes of tiredness

Many things can cause people to feel tired. A common cause of fatigue is not sleeping for long enough or not having a restful sleep. Physical illnesses like hypertension, diabetes and anemia or emotional disorders, e.g., feeling depressed, stressed or anxious are also common causes of tiredness. Finally, tiredness can be caused by a range of lifestyle factors, such as doing too little, doing too much, not having enough exercise and being overweight.

Effects of fatigue

If you have been feeling tired for some time it is likely that you are experiencing mental and physical problems as a result

Some of the effects of fatigue can include:

- sleeping frequently
- lack of energy
- poor concentration
- problems in making decisions
- irritability
- frustration
- depression
- anxiety
- increased risk of accidents and Injury

About medication

It is important to note that there is no specific medication that by itself will cure fatigue. If the fatigue results *from* a physical or mental problem, medication for these problems may reduce some of the underlying fatigue. Sometimes certain antidepressants are useful for some people.

Medications that claim to make you less tired can lead to addiction. That means, you have to use more and more of the drug for it to help you and when you stop using it your symptoms become much worse. These medications are also harmful if taken during pregnancy or if used with alcohol and other drugs.

You must keep in mind that some of the medications people use to make them feel less tired:

- can be addictive
- can be harmful to your baby if you are pregnant
- can interact in a fatal way with alcohol and other drugs

How to overcome chronic tiredness

Identify possible causes

It is important to identify the possible reasons why you feel tired. The following sections will help *you to* work out whether your feelings of tiredness are caused by:

- poor sleep or sleep disorder
- physical disorders
- emotional disorders
- lifestyle factor

Once the problem is identified it will be possible to work out a solution to help you overcome feelings of being tired.

Poor sleep

Not getting enough sleep can make you feel tired. Have a look at the list below, and mark the items that are relevant to you. If there are others, write them in the space below.

- I have problems going to sleep
- I do not feel refreshed when I wakeup
- I frequently wake up during the night
- I wake up early in the morning and can't go back to sleep
- Other comments on sleep

.....

.....

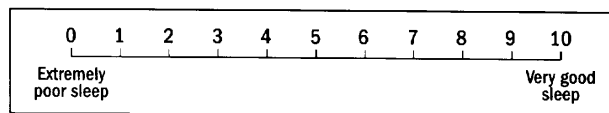
.....

.....

To see how well you are sleeping, you can use the form to record your sleep over three seven day periods. Filling out this form can help you work out how well you sleep. For the next seven days, write down the date, the time you go to bed (*Bed time*) and the time that you wake up (*Wake Time*). Also mark from the scale below how well you slept each night.

Sleep record form

	<i>Week 1</i>			<i>Week 2</i>			<i>Week 2</i>		
	<i>Bed time</i>	<i>Wake time</i>	<i>Quality of sleep (0-10)</i>	<i>Bed time</i>	<i>Wake time</i>	<i>Quality of sleep (0-10)</i>	<i>Bed time</i>	<i>Wake time</i>	<i>Quality of sleep (0-10)</i>
Monday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sunday	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



Sleep disorders

It is important to determine whether you are suffering from a specific sleep disorder. Think about the following questions.

- Has anyone told you that your snoring is loud or disruptive?
if so, you may be suffering from sleep apnea. This is a dangerous condition in which you stop breathing during sleep. There are effective medical treatments for this condition.
- Have you ever experienced sudden attacks of sleepiness during the day in which you cannot stay awake?
if so, you may be suffering from narcolepsy In which people feel forced to sleep for a period ranging from a few seconds to half an hour. This can be dangerous, particularly when driving or operating machinery. However, this condition responds to medication.
- Do you experience uncomfortable feelings in your legs or feet before falling asleep?
Does strong movement ease the discomfort? Has anyone told you that your muscles twitch or jerk? If the answer is yes to either of question, you may have a disorder involve which numerous episodes of twitching during the night. This condition can be corrected with vitamin E, iron, calcium or medications.

Make sure that you contact your doctor if you have answered 'yes' to any of the above.

Emotional causes

It is common to feel tired when feeling stressed, depressed, anxious or angry. Think about your situation, read through the list and mark those items that apply. If you have other emotional problems that are not listed, write them in the space provided.

Possible emotional causes

- Feeling stressed
- Worrying a lot
- Feeling sad or depressed
- Anger
- Other

.....

.....

.....

Lifestyle causes

You have already examined how you are sleeping and whether poor sleep could be causing your fatigue. There are other common lifestyle causes of fatigue. Read the list and mark the items that apply to you. If there are other possible lifestyle causes write them in the space below.

Possible lifestyle causes

- Not enough to do during the day/night
- Getting bored with what you are doing
- Too much to do during the day/night
- Drinking alcohol every day
- No regular exercise routine
- No regular meals
- Eating too much
- Overweight
- Other lifestyle causes

.....

.....

.....

Overcoming fatigue

After reading through the list you may have become aware of a possible cause of your fatigue. If you are still not sure, you should consult your physician.

Once you have identified a 'cause' you can start to plan ways to overcome your fatigue.

If you are not sleeping well then you should discuss this with your doctor.

If you have identified a physical cause then you should discuss ways of managing the problem with your doctor. Although there may be no immediate cure for a chronic illness, there might be better ways to manage the symptoms so it is less likely to make you tired.

If you have identified an emotional cause for feeling tired then you should discuss it with your doctor or counsellor. You might also want to try the 'slow breathing relaxation' exercise.

If you have identified a lifestyle cause then you should consider some of the following strategies.

Dealing with lifestyle causes

It is important to change lifestyle causes of your tiredness. Here are some examples of what you can do. Read the strategies below and mark those that would be useful to you.

- we recommend (if practical) that you take a short holiday, where you can relax and also work out some of the changes that you will make in your lifestyle
 - we also recommend that you carry out the slow breathing for relaxation exercise, described below
- ➔ **If you are doing too much**, you can look at ways of reducing your workload, e.g. asking others to help around the house, asking your employer for an assistant, reducing the times you socialize.
- ➔ **If you are doing too little**, you can look for activities that you enjoy and that will keep you busy, e.g., join a social club, look for volunteer work, adopt new hobbies.
- ➔ **If you are overweight**, we recommend that you reduce the amount of food that you eat and limit your fat and sugar intake. It would be useful to discuss a diet plan with your physician.
- ➔ **If you are bored**, it will important to find and build into your day some activities that you enjoy and find stimulating
- ➔ **If you do not exercise**, we recommend that you slowly build up to a regular exercise routine (if you are over 65 or have a medical condition discuss this with your physician)

Slow breathing for relaxation (a special technique)

Feeling physically or mentally tense can interfere with sleep. Learning ways to relax can help sleep problems. There are many types of relaxation techniques. We will describe a breathing method below.

- ➔ breathe in the count of 3 seconds.
- ➔ when you get to 3, slowly breathe out to the count of 3
- ➔ repeat this exercise for 5 minutes.
- ➔ when you are doing it last time say the word 'relax' to yourself as you breathe out
 - breathe in using your abdomen (not your chest) and through your nose
 - practise 10-15 min., at night in a comfortable chair
 - keep in mind that the benefits of relaxation will not occur unless you practise

Identify pleasant activities

Think about those activities that you enjoy and those that you would like to have done (but never have). Write them below and carry out at least one of these activities each day

Pleasant activity

Activity I have always want to do

.....
.....
.....

.....
.....
.....

Establish a regular exercise routine

Look at the list below.

A little activity: taking leisurely walks, once or twice a week

Same activity: daily activities of regular housework, shopping, taking frequent walks

Active: routine exercise, aerobics, playing tennis, etc.

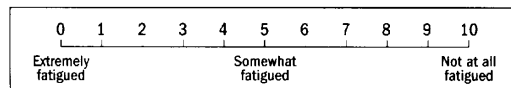
If you are not in the active group try to increase your level of activity by establishing a regular exercise routine. This can help you to overcome fatigue.

- start slowly
- gradually increase your level of activity
- choose activities that you enjoy
- choose convenient activities (those that fit into your daily routine)

Remember: if you are older than 65 years of age or have a chronic health condition or other physical problem consult your doctor first before starting an exercise programme

Filling out the following forms will help you keep track of your progress. Each day write down the date, and what you did during the day. Mark how tired you were, using the scale as a guide. Give yourself an overall rating of how fatigued you were over the week and mark this each week on the graph provided below.

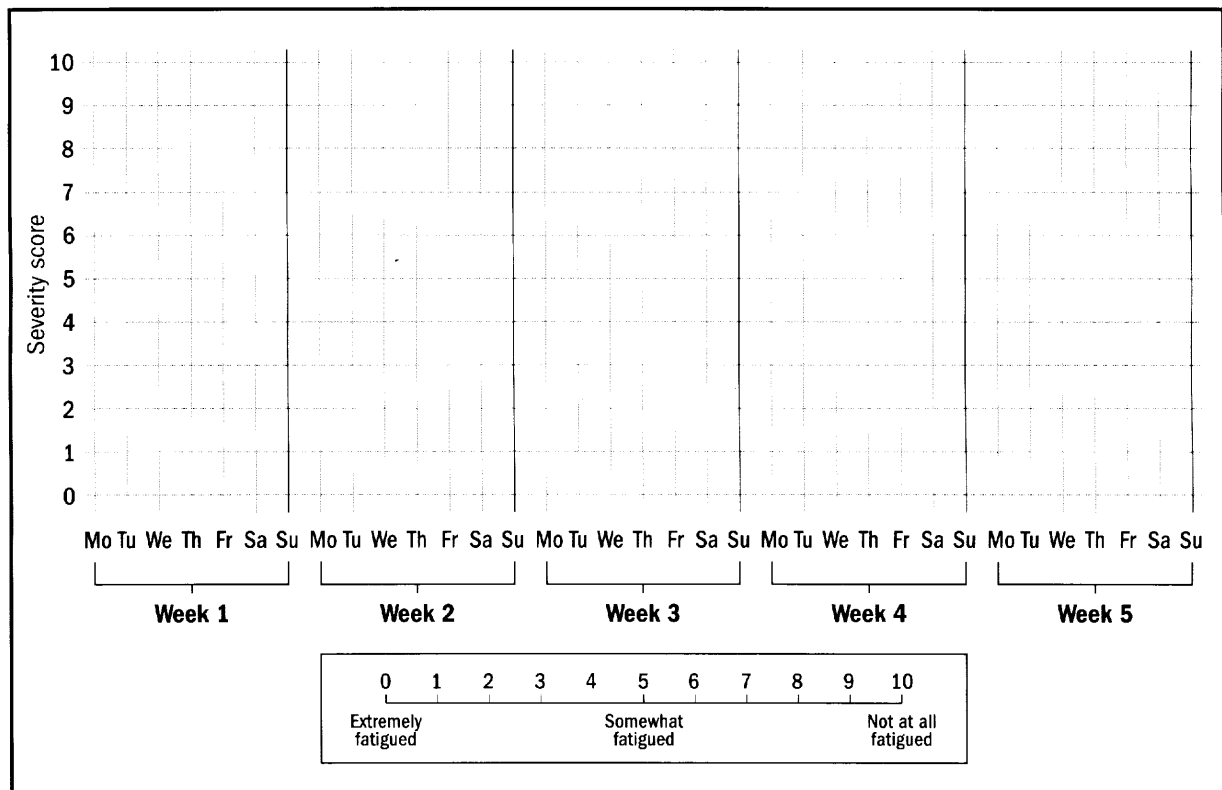
Record feelings of tiredness



Week _____

	Level of fatigue			
	Not at all	Mild	Moderate	Severe
Monday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Tuesday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Wednesday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Thursday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Friday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Saturday	_____	_____	_____	_____
Sunday	_____	_____	_____	_____

Personal Progress Chart



This page will be filled by local centers or attending Primary Care Providers

Notes

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Medication information

.....
.....
.....
.....

Self-help groups

.....
.....
.....
.....

Counselors

.....
.....
.....
.....

Doctors

.....
.....
.....
.....

Help lines

.....
.....
.....
.....

Suggested reading

.....
.....
.....
.....

Other materials

.....
.....
.....
.....

ICD-10 PC: Questionnaire for

Chronic Tiredness

During the *last month* have you had any of the following most of the time. If yes, please check or mark the relevant box.

I. Do you feel tired most of the time?

If YES to the above, continue below

1. Are you tired all the time?
2. Do you get easily tired while performing every day tasks?
3. Is it difficult to recover from the tiredness, despite rest?
4. Do you have any medical problems or physical pains?
5. Are you taking any medication?
6. Have you been feeling sad, down or depressed or have you lost interest
or pleasure in activities you normally enjoyed?
7. Have you been feeling worried, anxious or tense?
8. How much alcohol do you drink In a typical week?
9. Are you doing too much at home or work?
10. Do you seldom set time aside for leisure activities?
11. Have you been having problems with sleep?

I. During *the last month* have you been limited in one or more of the following areas most of the time:

- Self care: bathing, dressing, eating?
- Family relations: spouse, children, relatives?
- Going to work or school?
- Doing housework or household tasks?
- Social activities, seeing friends, hobbies?
- Remembering things?

II. Because of these problems doing the *last month*:

How many days were you unable to fully carry out your usual daily activities? _____

How many days did you spend in bed in order to rest? _____