

FACT SHEET



Physical Changes After Brain Injury Fatigue

QUICK FACTS

- An overwhelming lack of energy that can be physical or cognitive
- A real symptom, not mind over matter
- May be associated with anxiety, depression or other conditions

WHAT MIGHT IT LOOK LIKE?

Physical Fatigue:

- Needs sleep
- Complains of being tired
- Muscle weakness
- More emotional

Cognitive Fatigue:

- Lack of focus and attention, slowed thinking,
- Feel like brain isn't keeping up (e.g. re-reading the same paragraph)
- Poor memory or difficulty communicating
- More emotional or irritable

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE CAUSES AND COMPLICATIONS?

Possible causes of cognitive fatigue:

- Listening, reading, concentrating, talking, multi-tasking, etc.
- May be complicated by medications
- When the brain is “tapped out” or when tired
- Caused by a decrease in the body's reserve

Possible causes of physical fatigue:

- Overexertion, lack of exercise, nutritional deficiencies (B12, anemia)
- Medications (muscle relaxers, pain medications)
- Medical issues hormone imbalance

Possible complications:

- May affect the ability of the individual to care for themselves, enjoy things and engage safely in some activities (e.g. driving)
- May impact their mood, concentration, attention, memory and ability to function physically.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

- Plan and pace your activities: do important activities first and break down tasks into steps
- Schedule regular rests, but don't over nap as this can prevent you from sleeping at night
- Don't push through fatigue to complete tasks
- Practice good sleep hygiene (regular times for wake-up and going to bed)
- Exercise as tolerated (30-60 min per day); eat nutritiously

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace advice from a medical doctor. Consult a health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.