

Fatigue After an Acquired Brain Injury (ABI)

- Fatigue (feeling very tired) is common after an ABI. You may feel fatigued by:
 - › Physical activity
 - › Cognitive (thinking) tasks
 - › Everyday activities
- Fatigue can make any problems you have with these worse:
 - › Mood
 - › Talking
 - › Coordination (movement)
 - › Focusing
 - › Memory
 - › Vision (seeing)
 - › Balance
- Managing fatigue takes time. It is important to learn how to plan your daily tasks so that you get the right amount of activity. You can manage your fatigue by balancing activity and rest.

What causes fatigue after an ABI?

- You may have fatigue after an ABI because:
 - › your brain is working harder than it did before.
 - › some of your energy is being used to help your brain recover.
 - › of other factors (like medication, poor sleep, pain, stress, or depression).

Fatigue may show up in other ways:

- It may take you longer to do things.
- Your body may feel tired or worn out.
- You may find it hard to do more than 1 thing at once.
- You may get frustrated or grumpy more easily.
- You may find it hard to focus.
- You may find your thinking is slower.
- You may find it harder to get your words out.

Things that can make fatigue worse:

- | | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| › Trying to do too much | › Noisy or busy places | › Too much or too little exercise |
| › Not taking breaks | › Depression | › Social events |
| › Being sick | › Anxiety | |
| › Pain or headaches | › Stress | |
| › Poor sleep | › Poor nutrition | |

Prepared by: Acquired Brain Injury Ambulatory Care Teams

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This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Tips for coping with fatigue

1. Know the early warning signs so you know when to take breaks.

- Learn your early signs and stop **before** you push yourself too far. These early signs may be:
 - › Headache
 - › Slower thinking
 - › Clumsiness
 - › Grumpiness

2. Pace yourself.

- Make a daily or weekly plan. Put your plan somewhere you can see it (like on the fridge).
- Plan rests between activities, and before and after you have a busy period.
- Switch between easy and hard tasks. Balance work, chores, physical activity, and things you enjoy.

3. Break big tasks into smaller parts.

- Do part of a big task instead of the whole task at once. For example, clean 1 room instead of the whole house, or mow the front lawn and leave the back lawn for later.

4. Be realistic.

- Only do activities that you know you can handle. You will be more likely to finish the activity and have the energy to keep going.
- **Try not to overdo things when you feel good.** This can often make fatigue worse later.

5. Plan when you will do things.

- Planning makes tasks easier to manage and less stressful.
- Do important or harder tasks when you have the most energy. This may be in the morning or after a rest.
- Plan to do these tasks when you do not have other things taking your attention or time. For example, avoid driving in rush hour traffic, and shop at less busy times.

6. Plan how you will do things.

- Work in a quiet place so there is less distraction and stimulation or wear earplugs.
- When running errands, plan what you will do first, and take a list with you. For shopping, order over the phone or call ahead so things are ready when you get there.
- Buy prepared foods (like pre-chopped veggies and frozen meals) or think about using a meal delivery service.

Resources

Brain Injury Association of Nova Scotia

- › Phone: 902-473-7301
- › www.braininjuryns.com

211 Nova Scotia

A free community helpline.

- › Phone: 211
- › www.ns211.ca