

Fatigue in MS is real

## Outline



- What is Fatigue?
- How is MS fatigue different?
- What are the types of fatigue?
- Contributing factors to fatigue
- Where to go for follow up

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## Fatigue: What is it?



“Fatigue is a subjective lack of physical and/or mental energy that is perceived by the individual or caregiver to interfere with usual and desired activities.”

(from the MS council for clinical practice guidelines, October 1998)

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## Fatigue in MS



Most common symptom (Polman, et al, 2001)

Among the most disabling symptoms (Polman, et al, 2001)

Most common reason people leave employment (Kinkel, 2000)

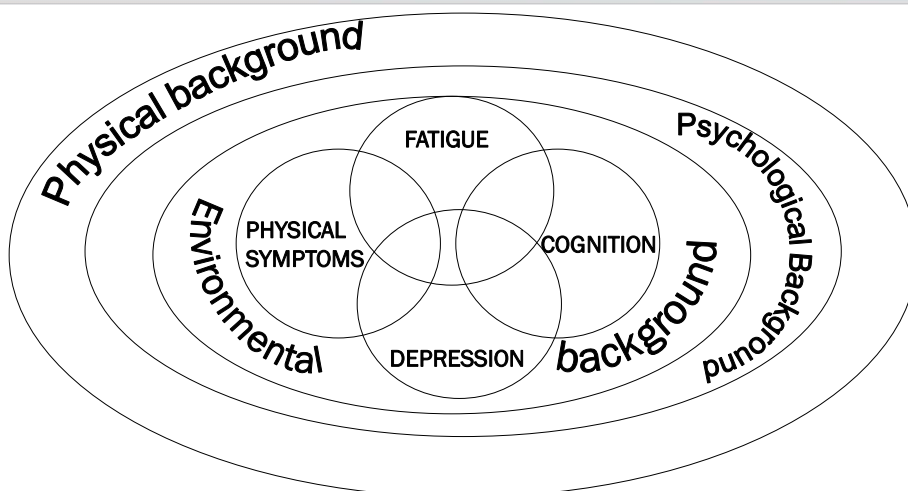
Overwhelming sense of tiredness

Different for each person

Cause of fatigue in MS is complex.

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## Fatigue in MS



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## What sort of fatigue?



### Chronic persistent fatigue is defined as:

- Fatigue that is present for any amount of time on 50 percent of the days for more than 6 weeks.
- Fatigue that limits functional activities or quality of life.

### Acute fatigue is defined as:

- New or a significant increase in feelings of fatigue in the previous 6 weeks.
- Fatigue that limits functional activities or quality of life.

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## Types of Fatigue



### Everyday Fatigue

### MS Fatigue

- Lassitude
- Nerve Fibre Fatigue /Neuromuscular
  - Physical
  - Cognitive



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## Lassitude



*Lassitude by definition means, 'a state or feeling of weariness, diminished energy, or listlessness.'*

Overwhelming Tiredness  
Not related to Activity Level  
Any Time of Day



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## Nerve Fibre Fatigue



Activity related failure of demyelinated nerve fibres to conduct messages.

May find ability to continue an activity suddenly diminishes or stops after repetition.

Usually resolves with short rest.



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## Everyday Fatigue – Contributing Factors



Sleep disturbance  
Infection  
Exertion/Deconditioning  
Medication  
Depression/Stress  
Environment



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## Contributing Factor - Heat



Temperature related failure of demyelinated nerve fibres to conduct messages.

Eg. Hot weather, hot bath, infection.

May experience a **temporary** worsening of symptoms.

Referred to as *heat sensitivity* or *temperature intolerance*.

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## Medications for Fatigue



Medications by themselves cannot solve the problem of fatigue in MS, but can play a role in overall management.

These include:

- Amantadine
- Modafinil

Speak to your neurologist &  
consider side effects.



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Fatigue Management Strategies

## Contributing factors: What can you change?



### **Sleep**

Are you sleeping poorly, might this be contributing to your fatigue?

### **Diet & lifestyle**

Are you eating a healthy, balanced diet?

### **Fitness & strength**

Are you doing some regular aerobic exercise?

### **Medications**

Are you taking medications that add to your fatigue?

### **Depression & Stress**

Do you feel consistently low or flat?

### **Other MS Symptoms**

Do you see your neurologist regularly to manage other MS symptoms?

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## Fatigue Management Strategies



- Planning and prioritisation
- Rest breaks
- Exercise
- Diet
- Sleep
- Energy conservation & Work simplification
- Communicate

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## Summary



MS Fatigue is different to normal fatigue

Could the fatigue you are experiencing be caused by something else? An infection, a relapse, a side effect of medication?

What can you change in your life to improve fatigue?

Seek specialist help available via MS Connect or through your local health professionals

Persist with suggested changes as it may take time to reap the benefits

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## Follow Up



- Specific Fatigue Management Programs
  - Managing Fatigue at Home
  - Managing Fatigue in the Workplace
  - Managing fatigue When Out and About
- Individual follow up with an MS OT
- Referral to local OT

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