

Fatigue

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is an extreme sense of tiredness. It is a common symptom after concussion. People with fatigue can feel a great sense of mental and/or physical tiredness that can affect:

- Motivation
- Well-being and quality of life
- Mental health
- Ability to solve problems and manage everyday responsibilities
- Other cognitive abilities
- Ability to enjoy daily activities
- Ability to interact with others



It is important to note that fatigue does not only mean feeling sleepy. Patients have described fatigue as 'shutting down', 'feeling like a zombie' or 'hitting a wall'.

Patients often feel cognitive or mental fatigue following a concussion that goes beyond the feeling of their body being tired.

How is Fatigue Assessed?

It is important to treat your fatigue early on, as it can cause other concussion symptoms to get worse. Your healthcare provider will do a physical exam and ask a series of questions to better understand your personal history and how severe your fatigue is. Your provider could ask when your fatigue happens, how it affects your life and if there are any factors that you think are causing it or making it worse. Fatigue can be made worse by other medical conditions you may have or medications you are taking.

Patient tips

Below are some tips from our patients for what they found helpful when they were first diagnosed with concussion.

Bring a support person

Bringing a support person like a family member or close friend with you to your medical appointments is a helpful way to make sure you talk about all your symptoms and understand any instructions your are given. After a concussion, it can be hard to remember large amounts of new information, and a support person can help you do this.

Keep a symptom journal

It is a good idea to keep track of your symptoms in a journal or log for future medical appointments. This way you can make sure you are not forgetting anything when you speak with your healthcare provider.



What can help reduce fatigue?

Some strategies that can help reduce fatigue include:

- Mindfulness-based stress reduction
- Exercise
- Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT)
- Blue-light therapy
- Pacing and planning activities
- Good sleep hygiene

Medication may be an option for some people. If your healthcare provider suggests the use of medication, it should be used along with other non-medication strategies and only under the close supervision of your primary care provider.

If your fatigue persists and it impacts your daily activities your healthcare provider may refer you to a specialized concussion clinic.

Additional Resources

Below is a list of resources you may find helpful to learn more about concussion diagnosis, as well as tools that may help you with your recovery process.

How to manage your energy after a concussion (pdf)

<https://boxingcanada.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/How-to-manage-your-energy-after-a-concussion.pdf>

Becoming a Self-Manager Brain Breaks (website)

<https://concussion.vch.ca/brain-breaks>

Coping Strategies for Fatigue (pdf)

<https://concussionsontario.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/appendix-11-3.pdf>

