

Fatigue & Acquired Brain Injury

The information in this newsletter is applicable to the area formerly known as PAPHR Health Region.



What is fatigue?

Fatigue is a feeling of exhaustion, tiredness, weariness or lack of energy. After TBI, you may have more than one kind of fatigue:

1. Physical fatigue: "I'm tired and I need to rest. I'm dragging today."
2. Psychological fatigue: "I just can't get motivated to do anything. Being depressed wears me out; I just don't feel like doing anything."
3. Mental fatigue: "After a while, I just can't concentrate anymore. It's hard to stay focused. My mind goes blank."

How common is fatigue after TBI?

Fatigue is one of the most common problems people have after a traumatic brain injury. As many as 70% of survivors of TBI complain of mental fatigue.

Statistics

- Fatigue has been found to affect up to 73% of brain injury survivors.
- 87% of brain injury survivors feel that fatigue has a negative impact on their life.
- 75% of brain injury survivors feel that people in their life do not understand their brain injury-related fatigue.
- 68% of brain injury survivors feel that their romantic relationships have worsened as a result of fatigue.

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Fatigue and ABI Con't

What causes fatigue?

Fatigue is normal for anyone after hard work or a long day. In persons with TBI, fatigue often occurs more quickly and frequently than it does in the general population. The cause of fatigue after TBI is not clear but may be due to the extra effort and attention it takes to do even simple activities such as walking or talking clearly. Brain function may be less “efficient” than before the injury.

- **Physical fatigue** can come from muscle weakness. The body needs to work harder to do things that were easy before the TBI. Physical fatigue gets worse in the evening and is better after a good night’s sleep. Often this kind of fatigue will lessen as the individual gets stronger, more active and back to his or her old life.
- **Psychological fatigue** is associated with depression, anxiety and other psychological conditions. This type of fatigue gets worse with stress. Sleep may not help at all, and the fatigue is often at its worst when you wake up in the morning.
- **Mental fatigue** comes from the extra effort it takes to think after your brain is injured. Many common tasks take much more concentration than they did before. Working harder to think and stay focused can make you mentally tired.
- **Certain conditions are known to cause or increase fatigue:**
 - Depression
 - Sleep problems, such as sleep apnea
 - Seasonal allergies
 - Hypothyroidism or other endocrine gland disorders
 - Respiratory or cardiac problems
 - Headaches
 - Lack of physical exercise
 - Vitamin deficiency/poor nutrition
 - Stress
 - Low red blood cell counts (anemia)
 - Medications commonly used after TBI, such as muscle relaxers and pain medication

Recognizing Fatigue

In order to cope with fatigue you must first be able to recognize it. So how do you know when you are getting fatigued or fatigue is starting to build up?

Some signs may include:

- yawning
- losing concentration/attention
- eyes feeling heavy, or eyesight blurring
- head feeling ‘fuzzy’
- fidgeting/getting irritable
- limbs feeling heavy
- stomach feeling sick

Recognizing fatigue con't

However, following brain injury it can be difficult to notice these signs. This may be due to problems with sensory feedback to the brain. What signs do you have that tell you that you are starting to get fatigued? How does it feel, what do you think and how do you behave? It may be helpful to ask your family and friends what signs they notice.

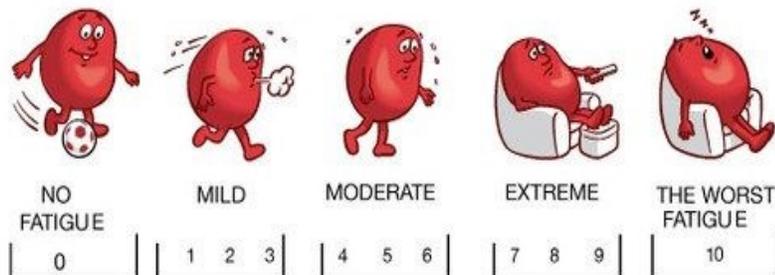
Triggers to Fatigue

Things that trigger fatigue will be different for everyone. Some examples of activities reported to be particularly draining following a brain injury include:

- working at a computer
- dealing with paperwork/correspondence
- being in a busy environment such as a shopping centre
- concentrating on one conversation in a noisy place like a pub
- travelling and unstructured times e.g. weekends or holidays
- **Tell your doctor if you think you might be depressed so treatment can be started.**
- **Ask your doctor if there are any blood tests that could help to find out what is causing your fatigue.**

It may take time to work out what your triggers are, so fatigue might feel difficult to control. However, it is likely that certain activities are more tiring for you; what are these? People around you may be able to help you to identify what these are.

You might want to consider monitoring your fatigue by rating how tired you feel before and after different activities, perhaps on a scale of 1-10. This may give you an idea of which activities you find more or less fatiguing.



Source: 4.bp.blogspot.com

It is important to recognize those activities or situations that are more tiring so that you can plan for them in your daily routine. Once you are aware of which activities are more or less tiring, then you can prioritize and set yourself realistic targets of what is achievable in a day.

What can be done to decrease fatigue?

- Pay attention to what triggers your fatigue, and learn to identify the early signs of fatigue, such as becoming more irritable or distracted. Stop an activity before getting tired.
- Get more sleep and rest. If you have insomnia, tell your doctor. There may be a medical condition causing this, or there may be useful treatments.
- Set a regular schedule of going to bed and awakening the same time every day: Include some regular rest breaks or naps. Be careful to limit naps to 30 minutes and avoid evening naps.
- Alcohol and marijuana will generally make fatigue worse.
- Caffeine (coffee, cola products) should be avoided after lunch if sleeping is a problem
- Start with familiar tasks at home or work that you can complete without fatigue. Gradually increase the complexity of each task, taking breaks as needed.
- Improve your time management:
 - avoid over-scheduling
 - Plan and follow a daily schedule. Using a calendar or planner can help manage mental fatigue.
 - Prioritize activities. Finish what is most important first
 - Do things that require the most physical or mental effort earlier in the day, when you are fresher.
 - If visitors make you tired, limit time with them.
- Exercise daily. Research has shown that people with TBI who exercise have better mental function and alertness. Over time, exercise and being more active helps lessen physical and mental fatigue and builds stamina. It also may decrease depression and improve sleep.
- Talk to your doctor:
 - Discuss medical or physical problems that may be causing fatigue.
 - Have your doctor review all your current medications.
 - Tell your doctor if you think you might be depressed so treatment can be started.
 - Ask your doctor if there are any blood tests that could help to find out what is causing your fatigue.

Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center.2021.Fatigue and Traumatic Brain Injury. Retrieved from msktc.org/tbi/factsheets/fatigue-and-traumatic-brain-injury

Jacqui Wheatcroft and Donna Malley.November202.ManagingFatigue after Brain Injury. Retrieved from headway.org.uk

Chronic fatigue syndrome.[online image].Retrieved from stl.health.India.com

Kr. Kathleen Perry.(2017).[online image].Retrieved from drkathleenperry.com/fatigue-hormone-thyroid/

ABI Services Library

We also have a large collection of reference books, activity guides, and easy to read books available for survivors, family members & professionals to borrow.

We have an online searchable list of all the resources in our collection.

Check out: www.librarything.com/catalog/ABIServices

To borrow resources from this collection, contact: **Lisa Chambers** phone 306-765-6629

Email: Lisa.Chambers@saskhealthauthority.ca

Additional resources are also available on the provincial website at <http://www.abipartnership.sk.ca/>

Sask. North Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Services

Who We Are

Sask. North Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Services is a group of programs that assists individuals, families and communities affected by an acquired brain injury.

We are a part of the Acquired Brain Injury Partnership Project that is managed by Sask Health and funded by Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI).

Our programs include:

- Sask. North ABI Outreach Team
- Sask. North Independent Living Program
- Sask. North Education and Prevention Program

Who We Can Help

To qualify for services clients must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Have a diagnosis of a moderate to severe acquired brain injury supported by medical records and be medically stable.
- Be a resident of Saskatchewan or eligible for Saskatchewan Health coverage.
- Are open to working cooperatively on goal-directed rehabilitation with ABI and other service providers.
- Community agencies, caregivers, employers, families and schools who require resources and support are eligible as well.

** Individuals are prioritized for services based on time since injury with priority given to those whose injury occurred in the past (3) years.

** Individuals who have a congenital brain injury or one that is a result of a progressive condition will not be considered.

What We Do

Sask. North ABI Outreach Team

- Case Management: helping develop client-driven goals, coordination health services, providing referrals and planning for return to work or school.
- Consultation: providing information to others regarding specific client care.
- Brain Injury education.
- Adult & children's camps

Sask. North Independent Living Program

- Activities of daily living: helping individuals become more independent through short-term interventions.
- Assistance to find housing.
- Therapeutic recreation and leisure services.
- Vocational: exploring work or volunteer opportunities.

Sask. North Education and Prevention Program

- Prevention Activities: Prevent Alcohol & Risk-related Trauma in Youth (PARTY) Program, Brain Walk, Brain Waves, Safety Resource Kits, ATV, snowmobile and traffic safety, Bike safety, Child car seat clinics and Fall Prevention.
- Mild Brain Injury (MBI) education.

Our mission is to provide individual and family support to people with ABI so that they may live successfully in their communities with improved quality of life.



**Sask. North
Acquired Brain
Injury (ABI)
Services**

1521– 6th Ave West
Prince Albert, SK
S6V 5K1

Phone:

(306) 765-6630

Toll Free:

1-866-899-9951

Fax:

(306) 765-6657

ABI Monthly Programming

Coffee Talk—#465 7th Street East Prince Albert

Join us for an afternoon of good conversation, sharing, learning, and lots of laughs!

- **Every second and fourth Thursday of the month**
- **1:30-3:00pm**

Phone Nicole for details (306) 765-6480

Drop in for all or a portion of this group.

Free program and Refreshments provided.



ABI Drop-In Program-Minto Bowl

Join us for an afternoon of cards, games and fun!

- **Wednesdays**
- **1:30-3:00pm**

The program is free.

Other programs offered include:

- Crafts
- Art
- Fitness

For further information on the programs offered at this time please call Nicole Storoschuk, Recreational Therapist at (306) 765-6480.

Introduction to ABI - Online Series

Available online at www.abipartnership.sk.ca

Designed to provide basic level knowledge about the effects of brain injury and strategies to help recovery. Many other resources are also available on this website.

