

# Fatigue

## Following Stroke



### Prevalence & Importance

- AT least half of all people following a stroke experience fatigue
  - It can be experienced months and even years after a stroke
  - Significant numbers of people report that fatigue is either the worst, or one of the worst symptoms post-stroke
- Fatigue can make other symptoms or effects from the stroke worse (concentration, memory, walking, pain, balance)
- Those with severe fatigue feel that they are at increased risk of falls
  - This leads to less confidence doing day-to-day activities
  - People will become less active, therefore increasing fatigue

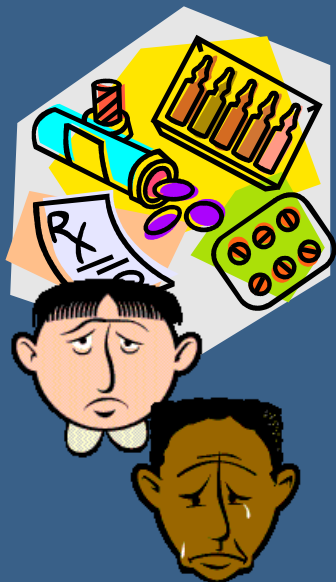
See the Action Plan Handout for more Information on How to Plan an Activity and Set Realistic SMART Goals



### What Is Fatigue?

- \* **When a person is aware of a decreased capacity to do physical and mental activity.**
- \* **Systems are out of balance**
- \* **Normal in healthy people**
- \* **Alerts them to rest or modify an activity.**
- \* **Will be resolved quickly.**

### Causes of Fatigue



- Social isolation (less contact with friends, family, or neighbors)
- Emotion: Depression, anxiety, fear.
- Some medications (dosage, time of day taken, side effects)
- Too much or too little stress in your life
- Fatigue causes fatigue (people will avoid activity adjusting their behavior to the cues of fatigue)
- Muscle weakness can cause fatigue
- Sleep apnea and other sleep disorders
- Restless leg syndrome, insomnia
- Frequent waking (bathroom visits)
- Too much caffeine
- Pain
- Financial worries
- Nutrition
- Inactivity (deconditioning)
- Increased energy demand for day-to-day activities owing to stroke related weakness

## How Does Stroke Cause Fatigue?

Increase in energy demand by the body

Poor Physical Conditioning

Poor Nutrition

Poor Sleep Quality

Emotions:  
Depression,  
Stress, Fear,  
Anxiety

Medication

## What Can You Do?

- Exercise Regularly
  - Builds endurance, improves sleep, lifts depression, improves mood, and reduces stress
- Stress reduction techniques
  - Promotes relaxation
- Sleep management and education (sleep disorders)
  - If you have been prescribed a device to help with sleep apnea (CPAP) then use it regularly
- Talk to your doctor about your medications
- If you have diabetes, good blood sugar control can help reduce fatigue
- Manage your expectations and manage the expectations of those around you (be realistic).
- Plan ahead before doing activities:
  - Do the most strenuous activity at the time of day you are most energetic or when the temperature is the most comfortable.
  - Plan rest breaks every 15 minutes. Sit down and have a glass of water, and assess how you are feeling.
  - Consider doing the activity over two or more days.
- Have 3 meals a day with snacks. Try to include a healthy source of protein in each meal.
- Drink water throughout the day.
- Add some challenges or social activities to your day:
  - Join a book club/Visit your local library
  - Get involved with your local church
  - Join a recreation facility
  - Invite a friend for coffee
  - Meet your neighbors and discover things in common
  - Call up a friend or family member and organize walks at various parks

