



## Fatigue or Not Fatigue?

During this Stay at Home period, our lives are seeing several adjustments. It can be difficult to keep up our energy and stamina when we can't do the things we normally do every day or go the places we normally like to go or see the people we normally like to see and interact with them in a physical presence or be able to hug each other. If we have no stimulation in our daily life, we become unmotivated and lack energy. However, if we are overstimulated with constant information from the news and feeling uncertain about the days ahead or if we are living with a large family with little alone time or space, we can also feel overwhelmed, wary and lack the ability to focus.

So, what is fatigue? Fatigue or tiredness is a normal part of aging or common symptom of aging as some would describe it. It is normal to feel tired on and off, general drowsiness or sleepiness and to experience less stamina and energy than when you were younger. Endurance and stamina can vary from person to person, as well. Your body's ability to handle various activities can become temporarily exhausted. With some rest and/or a meal, you feel energized to go again.

There are several factors that contribute to your energy level. These are:

- Your body's metabolism.
- Your body's amount of oxygen and nutrients at the cellular level.
- Your body's hormone levels.
- Your body's emotional and mental outlook.

However, when the fatigue is experienced as excessive tiredness, listlessness, persistent weariness, lack of energy over 2-4 weeks and is something new for you, then you should see your doctor to rule out a physical cause, such as a chronic illness or disease or their treatments (cancer therapy); psychological cause, such as depression anxiety or stress or a side effect of a medication, such as an antihistamine, pain medication, sleeping pill, some antidepressant, or beta blocker for heart disease.

So, here are some ideas to reduce or combat fatigue.

- First, make sure you don't have an underlying medical condition contributing to your fatigue. So, see your doctor first.
- Get plenty of sleep. This can be the most common cause for fatigue. Go to bed and get up at the same time each day. Try to sleep 7-8 hours. If you need a nap, try to nap earlier in the day and for less than 30 mins. To do otherwise, may contribute to not getting a good night sleep.

- Create a new daily routine for yourself that gets you up and going. Enjoying the day. Stick to it, too.
- If you are in a crowded household due to the Safe At Home rule, try to find an area and a time for some alone time. Practice a mindfulness technique. There are several sites you can google to learn how to do this.
- Make a list of people you can reach out to each day to talk with and give support. Often time, we feel better when we are helping others.
- Set some kind of exercise, movement program for yourself, even if it is for a few minutes a few times each day. Exercise/physical activity will help increase your energy and stamina as well as improve your heart, lungs and muscle strength, decrease stress and depression, and improve appetite. Right now, there are several free exercise classes, instructional and dance videos, tai-chi, and yoga classes online. And be sure to get out and walk. Enjoy sunny days that are not too hot.
- Eat frequent small meals and healthy snacks throughout the day every 3-4 hours. This can increase your energy by working your metabolism and meeting your energy needs. Remember caffeine and too much alcohol can interfere with a good night sleep.
- Keep hydrated through out your day every day. This will aid in your concentration and alertness and helps you physically.

So, during this Safe At Home period, these are some things you can do to combat fatigue until you are able to do more of the things you truly enjoy doing. For activities that can contribute to these suggestions, please see our Virtual Senior Center on our Prince William Area Agency on Aging. [www.pwcgov.org/aging](http://www.pwcgov.org/aging). Scroll to the recreation tab and then to the Virtual Senior Center tab. Here you will find various activities, games, and useful information to help support you. Also, for more details on the information collected and presented here, please check these online articles:

- Yes ‘Quarantine Fatigue’ Is Real. Here’s How to Cope, by Dan Gray, May 4, 2020. Healthline; [www.healthline.com/health-new/quarantine-fatigue-is-real-heres-how-to-cope](http://www.healthline.com/health-new/quarantine-fatigue-is-real-heres-how-to-cope).
- When is Being “Too Tired” a Problem? MUSC Health, Medical University of South Carolina; [www.muschealth.org/medical-services/geriatrics-and-aging/being-tired](http://www.muschealth.org/medical-services/geriatrics-and-aging/being-tired).
- Fatigue (Tiredness) in Elderly: Causes and How to Treat it by Dr. Victor Marchione, March 16, 2017. Belmarra Health; [www.belmarrahealth.com/fatigue-tiredness-elderly-causes-treat/](http://www.belmarrahealth.com/fatigue-tiredness-elderly-causes-treat/).
- Older and Stuck at Home? Expert Advice on Fitness by Gretchen Reynolds, The New York Times, April 22, 2020, Updated April 24, 2020. [www.nytime.com/2020/04/22/well/move/coronavirus-exercise-seniors-older-home.html](http://www.nytime.com/2020/04/22/well/move/coronavirus-exercise-seniors-older-home.html).

- **Age Page, Fatigue: More than Being Tired.** National Institute on Aging, [niaic@nia.nih.gov](mailto:niaic@nia.nih.gov).

**Enjoy your day.**

