Post-Stroke Fatigue

Information for patients and families

What is post-stroke fatigue?

- an intense feeling of tiredness that isn't related to how active you have been
- tiredness doesn't improve with rest
- lack of energy to perform your usual tasks or activities
- abnormal need for naps or prolonged sleep
- feeling more tired after activities than you did before your stroke

You may experience fatigue in different ways

Physical Fatigue: feeling low energy or unusually tired after being active.

Cognitive Fatigue: feeling unusually tired after activities that require attention or multi-tasking. It may be difficult to concentrate, and your memory may be affected.

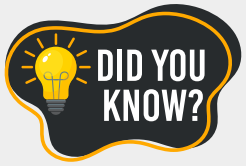
Emotional Fatigue: feeling unusually tired after activities that are emotionally demanding. It may be difficult to regulate your emotions (e.g. feeling sad, irritable or anxious).

Personal Experience

"I had a lot of fatigue early on, but it slowly gets better as you get stronger and get more awareness of how your body has changed.
- RESHMA

"It is different than general tiredness...when you get fatigued you can't function. I just can't take a break to recharge, I need to lay down."
- CAROLYN

"You want to keep going but you can't...accept it but you don't have to let it control your life...You find your strategies to let you live the life you want."
- JENNA



40-70% of people may experience post-stroke fatigue

It can happen at any time in your recovery

Fatigue can cause:

- frustration
- sadness
- anger

For more information about post-stroke fatigue, scan the QR code

Or visit cesnstroke.ca/stroke-education-resources-for-patients/

Acknowledgement: Adapted with permission from Lakeridge Health Oshawa

Updated August 2025

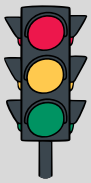
What can you do to help post-stroke fatigue?

- eat a healthy diet and drink water
- practice good sleep habits (e.g.,adequate sleep, regular sleep schedule, avoid alcohol)
- be active. Even small increases in physical activity have benefits.
- determine which activities contribute to your fatigue
- use the 4 P's to conserve energy (see below)
- cognitive behavioral therapy may be helpful for some people. For information about cognitive behavioral therapy visit Bouncebackontario.ca

Talk to your healthcare providers about your fatigue and treatment options that are right for you.

Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists can help you develop strategies to manage your fatigue.

Follow the 4 Ps to help conserve energy



The traffic light system can help with planning:

1 **RED** activity - more demanding in nature

2-3 **YELLOW** activities - hard activities that can be spread around the day/week for balance

Unlimited **GREEN** activities - light activities that are meaningful and bring pleasure (e.g., arts/crafts, mindfulness)

Prioritize: do what needs to be done. Do not spend energy on unnecessary activities. Complete the most important tasks first.

Plan: make a schedule of activities for the day or week. Spread out the most energy demanding tasks to avoid fatigue.

Do activities at a time of day when you have the most energy. Give yourself extra time to do a task.

Pacing: strike a balance between activity and rest. Try to rest before a demanding activity or take breaks during it.

It may take longer to complete tasks than it did prior to your stroke.

When you are feeling energized, do not overdo it. Otherwise, you may feel exhausted for 1-2 days afterwards.

Positioning: sit during an activity if possible. Consider using an assistive device such as a long handled reacher. Keep necessary items close by.

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