CENTRAL EAST STROKE NETWORK

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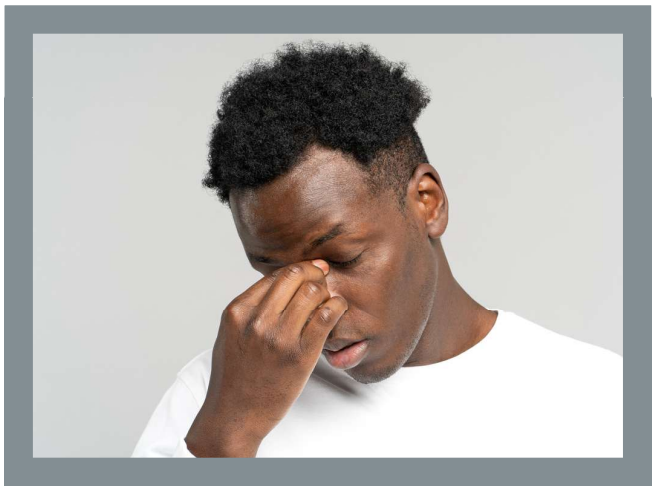
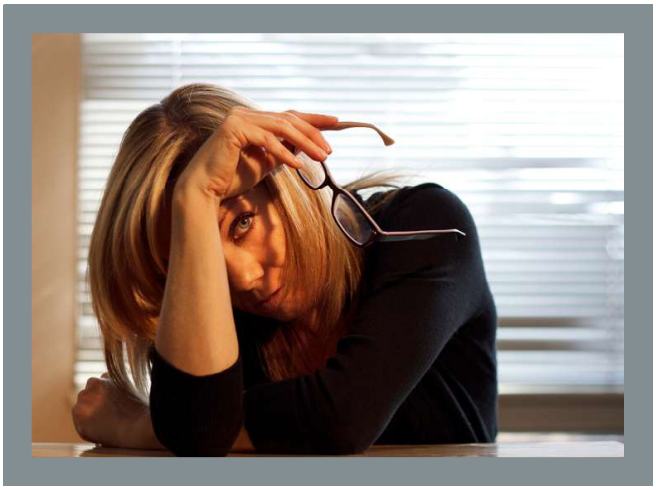




POST-STROKE FATIGUE TOOLKIT

IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCE

JUNE 2025*

*updated August 2026

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This implementation resource is intended to support the uptake of the **Central East Stroke Network (CESN) Post-Stroke Fatigue Toolkit** and associated organizational processes to address:

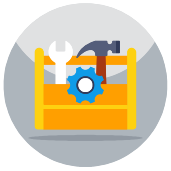
- Screening for post-stroke fatigue in inpatient settings (acute, rehabilitation) and community settings (stroke prevention clinics, community stroke rehabilitation - in home and outpatients, primary care).

- Education about post-stroke fatigue and its management for health care providers and persons with stroke and their families.

Implementation Guide Topics

- Introduction
- Post-Stroke Fatigue Toolkit
- Toolkit: Healthcare Provider Resources
- Toolkit: Patient Resources
- Screening for Post-Stroke Fatigue
- Sustainability
- Project References

CESN Post-Stroke Fatigue Toolkit



Resources to support:

- education for staff, patients and families
- screening for post-stroke fatigue

Click HERE to visit the toolkit.

Acknowledgement

The Central East Stroke Network would like to thank all those who helped to shape the content in this toolkit; clinicians who participated by reviewing and providing feedback on education resources, and persons with stroke for so generously sharing their experiences with us and for their willingness to be featured in the education resources developed.

We gratefully acknowledge that the education resources developed, have leveraged resources developed by Lakeridge Health and St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital.

INTRODUCTION

What is Post-Stroke Fatigue?

- An overwhelming sense of tiredness or exhaustion that doesn't always improve with rest. It is not necessarily related to a person's recent activity.
- Post-stroke fatigue is not explained by the type of stroke, side of stroke, severity of the stroke, or location of stroke in the brain and is not associated with stroke severity.
- It can occur at any time after a stroke, including during the first few weeks.
- Post-stroke fatigue may improve with time. For some people it can last for up to 3 years or more.

Post-Stroke Fatigue is:

- under recognized. The signs of post-stroke fatigue are not always obvious.
- mistaken for depression. Fatigue and depression after stroke are different. Each of these conditions needs to be recognized and managed.

The Lived Experience

Post-stroke fatigue:

- is highly prevalent. It can affect 38-73% of persons post stroke
- can occur at any point during the recovery process

Persons with stroke report feeling unprepared regarding the experience of fatigue.

Post-stroke fatigue can have a **SIGNIFICANT IMPACT** on a person's ability to function, participate in activities and their overall quality of life.

"At first I didn't know post-stroke fatigue was a thing." Jenna, living with stroke in the CESN

Why Address Post-Stroke Fatigue?

Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations

Education about post-stroke fatigue for patients, families and healthcare providers, and screening for post-stroke fatigue and associated co-morbidities are recommended best practices.

* For more information about these recommendations, click here

Practice Gaps Identified

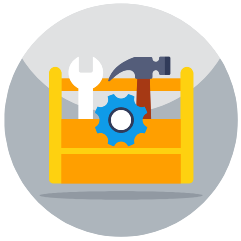
CESN Standards of Care Assessments and a subsequent environmental scan identified gaps in:

- screening for post-stroke fatigue
- education resources for healthcare providers
- provision of education for persons with stroke and their families

Role of the Healthcare Provider

- Be knowledgeable about post-stroke fatigue, management strategies and resources
- Screen persons with stroke at least once prior to discharge and when clinically indicated, document findings following the established organization protocols
- Provide education about post-stroke fatigue, its management and encourage use of energy conservation strategies
- Encourage persons with stroke to self-advocate, including acknowledging their energy status and when rest is needed
- Consider if other conditions or medications may be worsening the fatigue
- Be a supportive and active listener

Visit the **CESN Post-Stroke Fatigue Toolkit** for resources to support education for staff, patients and families, and screening for post stroke fatigue (including multilingual versions of the Fatiuge Assessment Scale). Click HERE to visit the toolkit.



Toolkit: Healthcare Provider Resources

Resources to inform healthcare providers about Post-Stroke Fatigue - what it is, the importance of screening and management strategies. Includes:

- Post-Stroke Fatigue Learning Module
- Staff Education Handouts
- Links to:
  - Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations
  - Post-Stroke Fatigue Screening Tools
  - Webinars
  - Multilingual versions of the Fatigue Assessment Scale
  - and much more

BEST PRACTICE

"Individuals should be monitored for post-stroke fatigue throughout the trajectory of stroke recovery as it is a common and disabling condition."

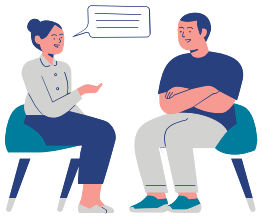
"Healthcare professionals should anticipate the possibility of post-stroke fatigue in individuals with stroke, and mitigate fatigue through assessment, education of the individual and their family, and interventions throughout the stroke-recovery continuum."*

*Canadian Stroke Best Practice Recommendations, Post Stroke Fatigue, 2025

Toolkit: Patient and Family/Caregiver Resources

Includes:

- Lived Experience video series
- Education handouts
  - What is post-stroke fatigue
  - Management Strategies
- Information for persons with aphasia
- Links to other resources



The **CESN Post-Stroke Fatigue Toolkit** is located on the CESN website. Click HERE

Post-Stroke Fatigue Learning Module

- **Target Audience:** All healthcare providers working in stroke care in the inpatient (acute and rehabilitation) and community settings (SPC, community rehabilitation and re-integration services)
- **Access:** via the CESN Learning Management System. Click HERE
- **Topics**:
  - post-stroke fatigue & the types
  - common signs of post-stroke fatigue
  - importance of education and screening
  - identifying who should be screened and when
  - management strategies
  - available education resources for patients and families/caregivers

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the CESN Learning Management System contact: cesn@rvh.on.ca. Click HERE to signup

Staff Education Resources-Handouts

Post -Stroke Fatigue

Topics include:

- What is post-stroke fatigue
- Types of post-stroke fatigue
- Signs of post-stroke fatigue
- The Lived Experience
- Role of the health care provider
- The 4Ps of Energy Conservation

Screening for Post-Stroke Fatigue

Topics include:

- Screening
- Screening Tools
- Fatigue Assessment Scale
- Positive Screens
- Screening for other conditions

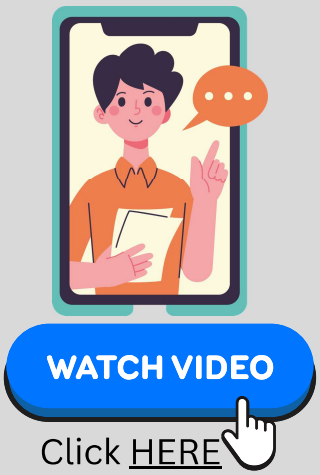
Incorporate the Post-Stroke Fatigue Learning Module into:

- new staff orientation
- learning requirements for current staff

Use the handout resources during staff huddles, education blitzes

Click HERE to access these resources and many more

Lived Experience Video Series



Click HERE

Three individuals from the CESN share their experiences with post-stroke fatigue:

1. What is your experience with post-stroke fatigue? (4:59mins)
2. What strategies work for you to manage your post-stroke fatigue? (4:24 mins)
3. What has been the impact on your recovery? (4:19 mins)
4. What is your advice for others living with post-stroke fatigue? (4:56 mins)

Full video- Post-Stroke Fatigue: A Lived Experience (15:48 mins)

Education Handouts

Post Stroke Fatigue

Topics include:

- What is post stroke fatigue?
- Different types of post stroke fatigue
- Personal Experience
- What can you do to help?
- 4Ps of Energy Conservation

Energy Conservation

Topics include:

- Hygiene and dressing
- Shopping
- Cooking
- Housework
- Laundry

Education Handouts for persons with aphasia

- What is post-stroke fatigue?
- Energy Conservation Tips
- What is energy conservation?
- Laundry
- Shopping
- Housework
- 4 Ps of energy conservation
- Hygiene and dressing
- Cooking

Helpful Tips

- Establish processes to document provision of patient education
- Lived Experience Videos can be linked to iPads used for patient education, bedside TV systems, and shared in patient education classes
- Include the handouts in existing patient education resources (e.g. patient education binders, education classes)

Click HERE for these resources and many more

SCREENING FOR POST-STROKE FATIGUE

During inpatient care

Prior to discharge, persons with stroke should be provided with information regarding sleep patterns and post-stroke fatigue.

IF a patient is expressing feelings of fatigue or exhibiting signs of reduced energy – **then SCREEN**

Screening should be done at least once prior to discharge (regardless of whether the patient expresses feelings of fatigue) and when clinically indicated. This can occur at transfer from acute care to inpatient rehabilitation, and inpatient rehabilitation to community.

In community settings

Screening should be completed periodically. It can occur in primary care, home care, stroke prevention clinics and outpatient rehabilitation.

Canadian Stroke Best Practices recommends that people with stroke should be:

- screened at transitions and when indicated for their level of coping, risk of depression and other physical and psychological issues. Post-stroke fatigue is a part of this.
- periodically screened for post-stroke fatigue during follow-up healthcare visits.

Helpful Tips

- incorporate screening for post-stroke fatigue into organizational workflows, care pathways
- establish a process to document findings
- identify a champion to support the change management process

Screening for other conditions

People with post-stroke fatigue should be screened for common post-stroke co-morbidities and medications that are associated with and/or exacerbate fatigue.

Medications such as:

- certain drugs used to treat hypertension (Beta Blockers)
- antidepressants
- antianxiety/sedatives
- antihistamines
- opioids or other pain medications

Co-morbidities such as:

- depression and other mood-related conditions
- sleep apnea and other factors that decrease the quality of sleep
- anemia
- systemic infections, such as UTI
- pain
- hypothyroidism
- dehydration

SCREENING FOR POST-STROKE FATIGUE

Who completes the screening?

The team member(s) responsible for screening for post-stroke fatigue can vary between organizations and the continuum of care.

Considerations when identifying who should complete the screening include:

- scope of practice
- time required to complete the screening
- unit workflows
- capacity of staff i.e., do some staff have greater capacity than others to administer the tool
- alignment with other screening processes e.g., depression screening
- alignment team members' roles e.g., Occupational Therapy
- whether or not the screening tool used can be self-administered

Regardless of who completes the screen, all team members should be aware of:

- post-stroke fatigue and the signs. Team members should share their findings with all members of the healthcare team.
- who is responsible for screening and where the results are documented

What happens if a screen is positive?

- Share this information with the rest of the interprofessional team and at transfers of care/ transition points
- Provide education about post-stroke fatigue, management strategies and energy conservation techniques such as the 4 P's
- Screen for post-stroke co-morbidities and medications that are associated with or exacerbate fatigue. If sleep apnea is suspected, refer to healthcare providers with expertise in sleep health.
- Provide information and link the individual to community resources and supports as appropriate (e.g., exercise programs, cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction programs)
- Repeat screening as clinically indicated

SCREENING FOR POST-STROKE FATIGUE

Which fatigue screening tool is recommended?

Screening for post-stroke fatigue should be completed using a standardized, validated tool.

An environmental scan of post-stroke fatigue screening tools used in the CESN was completed in March 2024. The majority of respondents indicated that their organization had not implemented a screening tool. In organizations which had implemented a fatigue screening tool, the Fatigue Assessment Scale (FAS) was used.

The FAS is a screening tool that has been validated with stroke patients.

The FAS is recommended by the Central East Stroke Network, but other screening tools may be used.

Key Messages

- screen for post stroke fatigue
- use a standardized, validated tool
- CLICK HERE for a list of validated screening tools

Fatigue Assessment Scale

A 10-item self-report scale.

It takes only minutes to administer.

Each question should be answered even if the person doesn't have any complaints at the moment.

Five questions reflect physical fatigue & 5 reflect mental fatigue.

Instructions:

The following ten statements refer to how you usually feel. Please give an answer to each question, even if you do not have any complaints at the moment.

		Never	Sometimes	Regularly	Often	Always
1	I am bothered by fatigue	1	2	3	4	5
2	I get tired very quickly	1	2	3	4	5
3	I don't do much during the day	1	2	3	4	5
4	I have enough energy for everyday life	5	4	3	2	1
5	Physically, I feel exhausted	1	2	3	4	5
6	I have problems to start things	1	2	3	4	5
7	I have problems to think clearly	1	2	3	4	5
8	I feel no desire to do anything	1	2	3	4	5
9	Mentally, I feel exhausted	1	2	3	4	5
10	When I am doing something, I can concentrate quite well	5	4	3	2	1

Image source and reference: https //novopsych.com.au/assessments/health/fatigue-assessment-scale-fas/

Scoring

A score between 22 & 34 indicates mild to moderate fatigue

Score of 35 or more indicates severe fatigue

Helpful Tips

The scoring convention for the Fatigue Assessment Scale reverses for Questions 4 & 10. This will be important to flag when educating staff about the tool.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Documentation Considerations

It is highly recommended that documentation processes are developed to capture:

- the administration of a fatigue screening tool and the resulting score
- the actions taken as a result of that score
- scanned copies of the completed screening tool when paper copies are used
- when a screening tool was self-administered

Clinical Informatic Systems

The Fatigue Assessment Scale has been built in the following clinical informatic systems and available to these organizations:

- Expanse: RVH, GBGH, CGMH
  - ID Number 3751190
- Epic: LH, PRHC, RMH, NHH, CMH and HHHS
  - ID Number 1171 CEHC AMB FATIGUE ASSESSMENT SCALE

Organizations are encouraged to leverage their clinical informatics systems to support:

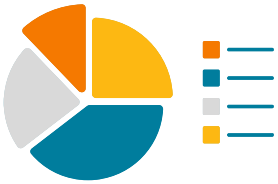
- documentation of screening, score, and resulting therapeutic interventions
- documentation of patient education occurrences
- incorporation of post-stroke fatigue education and screening into care planning and workflows
- performance monitoring

Supporting sustainability

Organizations are encouraged to develop processes and auditing reports to support implementation of post-stroke fatigue screening.

Suggested metrics to monitor include the number of persons with stroke

- screened for post-stroke fatigue
- that received education about post-stroke fatigue
- that screened positive for post-stroke fatigue
- identified as having post stroke-fatigue that received education about management strategies



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www.cesnstroke.ca

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