



How to Manage Fatigue

This guide will help you understand:

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This guide is written for people living with kidney disease and those who help care for them. It does not replace advice from your healthcare team (for example, your nephrologist, nurses, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, and family doctor).

What is Fatigue?

Fatigue is tiredness or lack of energy that lasts a long time and does not go away with rest or sleep.

- Your fatigue can range from mild to severe and may come and go over time
- Fatigue can make you feel:
 - Very tired, weak, heavy, or slow
 - Worn out
 - Like you can't think or remember things
 - Like you don't have the energy to see people or do activities that you enjoy

What Causes Fatigue?

Fatigue is common for people living with kidney disease. Many things can cause you to feel fatigue, for example:

- Buildup of toxins in your body caused by kidney disease
- Dialysis treatments
- Some medications
- Other health problems (for example, sleep apnea or severe anemia)
- Emotional distress caused by kidney disease or other problems
- Depression or anxiety
- Not getting enough physical activity and exercise

What Can I Do To Help Manage Fatigue?

Dealing with fatigue can be challenging. You may need to try different ways to try to improve or save your energy. You may need to be a bit creative in how you go about your day.

Tips to Increase Your Energy:

- Be as active as you can – exercise is a great way to improve your energy and lessen your fatigue



Always talk to your healthcare team about how to exercise safely

Tips to Save Your Energy:

Use your energy wisely in order to be able to do the things that are most important to you.



Prioritize

- Decide which activities are most important to you and save your energy for these activities
- Postpone or put off less important activities

Plan ahead

- Plan to be active, include time in your day to rest before and after activities
- Spread out tasks like housework over a longer period of time
- Ask family or friends to help you with things such as housework, shopping, and child or pet care
- Arrange your home so that most activities can be done on one floor
- Keep things you need often within easy reach
- Plan activities or outings where you can sit down to rest as needed
- If you are getting dialysis, plan more of your activities on non-dialysis days

Pace

- Do one activity at a time, without rushing
- Stop and rest before you get tired, even if you are in the middle of a task
- Rest between activities

Keep track of your fatigue in a journal or diary—you may notice that you have more energy at certain times of the day

Additional tips if you have very severe fatigue:

Daily Living

- Sit down to bathe or shower with a bath chair or bath bench
- Wear a terry cloth bathrobe to dry off
- Place chairs in strategic places around your home so you can stop and rest (for example, at the top and bottom of the stairs)

Housekeeping

- Do housework sitting down if possible (for example, sit down to iron)
- Drag or slide heavy items instead of lifting them
- Keep a small trash can in each room

Shopping

- Organize your shopping list by aisle
- Use a grocery cart for support
- Shop during less busy times
- Ask for help bringing your groceries to the car
- Consider shopping online

Preparing Meals

- Prepare meals sitting down
- Soak dishes instead of scrubbing and let dishes air dry
- Make double portions of food and freeze half

Tips to Improve Your Sleep:

Getting good sleep can give you more energy. Getting into a sleep routine where most or all of your sleep is at night can help make people feel better rested.

These tips can help you improve your sleep routine:

Morning

- Try to wake up at the same time every morning, even on weekends
- Open the curtains to let in light or go to a bright room after you wake up



Daytime

- Napping for a long time, early in the morning, or near bedtime can make it difficult to sleep at night
- Try to get some exercise every day

Evening

- Try not to eat large meals close to bedtime (for example, have a bigger meal for lunch and a lighter meal in the evening)
- Before going to bed, lower the lights and do a relaxing activity (such as reading, listening to music, taking a warm bath or shower). Try activities like prayer, meditation, or imagery.
- Turn off all screens, including computers, TV's, smartphones/cell phones and tablets (such as iPads), at least one hour before going to bed
- Limit caffeine (for example, coffee, tea, cola, chocolate), alcohol, and smoking



Bedtime

- Do not go to bed until you feel sleepy, no matter what time it is
 - Do not "try" to fall asleep
 - If you cannot fall asleep after 20 to 30 minutes, get out of bed and do a calm activity (for example, reading) until you feel sleepy and then go back to bed
- Make sure that the room you sleep in is quiet, very dark, and cool
 - Use a mattress and pillow that you find comfortable
 - Try a sound machine or a fan to block noise from inside or outside the house (white noise)
 - Try room-darkening blinds or curtains to make your room very dark
 - Turn off alerts and ringers on smartphones/cell phones and tablets
 - Keep a notepad at your bedside so that if you wake up you can write down your thoughts or worries and return to sleep with a clearer mind

Talk to your doctor about problems that might disturb your sleep, including changes in your mood, anxiety, and stress.

