

Managing Sleep Issues and Fatigue with Parkinson's

Understanding Fatigue

Fatigue is a common symptom for people with Parkinson's and can occur at any stage as the condition progresses. While "fatigue" and "sleepiness" are often used interchangeably, they are considered different things.

Fatigue is a constant feeling of tiredness that can be physical, mental, or emotional and sleepiness is a tendency to fall asleep during the day.

Feelings of fatigue can change from day to day. You may feel quite fit and able one day and then too tired to do much the following.

Causes of Fatigue

- Motor and non-motor symptoms
- Disrupted sleep
- Medication side effects
- Mood changes like depression or apathy

Managing Fatigue

- **Medical Solutions:** Talk to your healthcare team about adjusting your medications.
- **Energy Management:** Pace yourself with regular breaks and adjust your routine to conserve energy.
- **Exercise:** Regular physical activity can boost energy levels.
- **Sleep Schedule:** Maintain a regular sleep routine.

- **Short Breaks:** Take frequent, short breaks. Make a cup of tea, chat with a friend, or rest with your eyes closed.
- **Divide Tasks:** Do household jobs you can manage more easily.
- **Stay Engaged:** Keep up with hobbies and interests to avoid boredom.
- **Healthy Diet:** Eat a balanced diet with regular, healthy snacks to maintain energy levels.
- **Understand Limitations:** Pace yourself and respect your limits.

How Can Fatigue Affect People with Parkinson's?

Fatigue can vary from day to day. You might feel energetic one day and very tired the next. Sleep problems at night can also lead to daytime tiredness and lethargy. If fatigue is occurring at regular intervals, it may be related to fluctuating medication levels.

Treatments for Fatigue

- **Consult Healthcare Providers:** Discuss feelings of fatigue with your GP, specialist, or the Health Team at Fight Parkinson's to find the cause and treatment options.
- **Medication Adjustments:** Parkinson's medication may help manage symptoms and increase energy levels.

- **Other Medications:** Non-Parkinson's medications might help but discuss these with your GP or specialist.
- **Non-Drug Treatments:** Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) can be effective in some cases.
- **Exercise:** Engaging in a regular graduated exercise program can help build exercise tolerance and reduce fatigue.

Sleep Difficulties

Many people with Parkinson's experience sleep problems, which can significantly impact daily life.

Sleep and night-time problems are common in Parkinson's and may leave you feeling tired and sleepy during the day.

Common Sleep Problems

- Disrupted night-time sleep
- Day-time sleepiness
- Vivid dreams and nightmares (REM sleep disorder)
- Restless legs
- Nocturia (waking up to urinate)
- Sleep apnea
- Difficulty turning over in bed

Managing Sleep Difficulties

Medical Advice: Speak to your GP or specialist about your sleep issues. Adjusting medications may help.

Sleep Diary: Keep a sleep diary to track patterns and provide information to your doctor.

Professional Support: Consult an occupational therapist or physiotherapist for help with physical difficulties in bed.

Useful Tips for Better Sleep

- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and vigorous exercise close to bedtime.
- Keep your bedroom cool, quiet, and dark.
- Establish a regular bedtime routine.
- Engage in relaxing activities before bed, such as reading.
- Reserve your bedroom mainly for sleeping.
- Avoid stimulating activities such as watching TV or using screens (e.g. iPads or phones).

Managing Restless Legs

Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS) causes an overwhelming urge to move your legs, often accompanied by sensations like burning or tingling, typically occurring at rest and disrupting sleep.

Medical Advice: Consult your GP or specialist. Adjustments to Parkinson's medications or additional treatments may be necessary.

Diet: Increasing iron intake may help if low iron levels are a factor.

Managing Nocturia

Low or fluctuating blood pressure can contribute to retaining fluid in the lower limbs, which the body will try to pass when you lie flat. This can contribute to needing to urinate when you get into bed. Enlarged prostate in males can also contribute to nocturia.

Consider resting in the afternoon with your feet elevated to help reduce fluid build-up. Elevating the head of the bed at night will also help reduce the need to pass urine when in bed.

Medical Advice: Having your GP regularly check blood pressure is important and some medications may assist.

Useful Tips:

- Gently massage or stretch the affected muscles.
- Use hot or cold packs.
- Take a warm bath in the evening.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and smoking.
- Practice relaxation exercises.
- Engage in regular exercise during the daytime.

Support Resources

If you need support to manage fatigue or sleepiness, you are not alone. Fight Parkinson's is here to support you.

For further support and information:

- Call the Fight Parkinson's Information Line: 1800 644 189
- Email: info@fightparkinsons.org.au

Everyone's journey with Parkinson's is unique, so it may take time to find the best strategies for managing sleep issues and fatigue. Always consult with healthcare professionals for personalised advice.

Fight Parkinson's is a leading source of specialised health information, advice services. Through research, education and support, we strive to improve the lives of people living with Parkinson's, PSP, MSA and CBS.

Any medial information provided is for general information purposes only. You should always talk to your doctor and qualified healthcare providers for personal medical and health-related instructions.

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