



Written by Aaron King, M.D.

February 2017

Fatigue is a common complaint. It is estimated that at any time, up to 7% of the adult population will complain of fatigue and 25% of patients presenting to primary care physicians have fatigue. It is estimated that up to \$125 billion a year in the U.S., is lost to decreased work productivity due to fatigue.

Fatigue can come in different forms. Fatigue is best defined as an inability to initiate activity and / or a reduced capacity from maintaining activity. This is different from being sleepy, having muscular weakness or shortness of breath, as these are caused by separate medical conditions. Fatigue can range from mild to severe.

A subset of fatigue is the condition formerly known as Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, now currently called Systemic Exertion Intolerance Disease or (SEID). This form of fatigue tends to be more severe and affects a person's ability to work, think, be active and sleep. The diagnosis also requires the symptoms to last longer than 6 months.

For all causes of fatigue, it is important to rule out underlying medical causes first. Common causes can and should be screened by your primary care physician. Some conditions include thyroid disorder, anemia, food intolerances, hormone deficiencies, vitamin deficiencies, and sleep apnea. Many of these conditions are common and are fairly easy to evaluate and treat by your family provider.

Once these medical conditions have been ruled out, it is important to begin to understand lifestyle factors that can affect fatigue. Other common factors to consider, include quality of sleep, hours and type of work, dietary factors, and overall activity level. While most American adults average just 6.8 of sleep hours per night, most studies indicate that we function optimally on 7-9 hours per night. Also, the use of sleep aids and alcohol (along with the presence of sleep apnea) can reduce the quality of sleep. These issues prevent adequate time in deep, restorative sleep (Stage 3 and 4) and ultimately can result in chronic fatigue even if a person is spending adequate time in bed.

Healthy Recipe to Increase Energy

From the Kitchen of Jennifer Meachum RDN, LD

Cinnamon Peanut Butter Mousse Dip
Makes 12 Servings

1 Tbsp. Honey
1/2 Cup peanut butter, creamy
1 tsp. Cinnamon
3/4 Cup Vanilla Greek yogurt

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, combine honey, peanut butter, and greek yogurt until smooth.
2. Sprinkle with cinnamon.
3. Service with fresh apple slices.

Nutritional Information for 1 serving (2 Tbsp.)

86 calories; Fat 6 gm; Total Carbs 5 gm; Fiber 1 gm; Sodium 48 mg; Protein 5 gm





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Mental health issues also play a central role in fatigue. It is estimated that up to 70% of patients with fatigue lasting greater than one month have a concurrent mental health condition. The most common



mental health issues include depression, anxiety, insomnia, and somatization disorder (having physical ailments in the body when no cause can be identified). This is not surprising and indeed can be a chicken and egg phenomenon, more depression leads to more fatigue. A lack of productivity (due to fatigue) leads to more depression. It is important that both the patient and physician address these with appropriate care.

In short, the human organism is a complex biological entity that is the result a long history of responding to stresses. Our minds and bodies need to be challenged to both stay healthy and improve. The cycle of stress, recovery that then leads to adaption is a constant phenomenon that occurs constantly. If any or all of these phases is not in balance, our bodies will suffer. A lack of stress will prevent any kind of recovery or adaption. Sitting on the couch all day, for months on end, will cause weakness and illness.

Similarly, running a marathon every other day will result in excessive stress and inadequate recovery periods ultimately causing multiple physical impairments. With this in mind, it is critical to combat fatigue. We must assess ourselves for an appropriate amount (not too much, not too little) of stress, which will lead to recovery (adequate sleep, relaxation, nutrition, etc.) and will result in a healthy mind and body.



Article authored by
Aaron King, M.D.
Board Certified in Family Medicine

[Additional information on Dr. King](#)

**MedFirst
Overlook**
26112 Overlook Pkwy, Suite 1100
San Antonio, TX 78260
Telephone: (210) 497-2338



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