

## Why is fatigue important?

### Fatigue results in:

- Slower reactions,
- Reduced ability to process information,
- Memory lapses,
- Absent-mindedness,
- Decreased awareness,
- Lack of attention,
- Underestimation of risk,
- Reduced coordination etc.

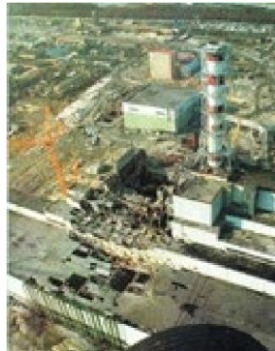
### Fatigue can lead to:

- Errors and accidents,
- Ill-health and injury, and
- Reduced productivity.

### Fatigue is often a root cause of major accidents for example:

- Herald of Free Enterprise,
- Chernobyl,
- Texas City,
- Clapham Junction,
- Challenger and
- Exxon Valdez.

Fatigue has also been implicated in: **20% of accidents** on major roads and is said to cost the UK **£115 - £240 million per year** in terms of work accidents alone.



## There are a number of key risk factors to consider when assessing and managing fatigue. These are:

- The workload,
- The work activity, e.g. complex or monotonous
- Shift timing and duration, e.g. problems with overtime and shift-swapping
- Direction of rotation and the number and length of breaks during and between shifts





### Other features of the workplace environment include:

- Physical environment,
- Management issues and
- Employee welfare
- Young workers tend to stay up later at night yet their growing bodies need extra sleep




Feeling exhausted is so common that it has its own acronym, TATT, which stands for "tired all the time".

### PHYSICAL CAUSES

- **Anaemia** - affects around 1 in 20 men & postmenopausal women, but may be even more common in women who are still having periods. Common symptoms include tiredness and lack of energy. 
- **Under active thyroid** means you have too little thyroid hormone (thyroxine) in your body. This makes you feel tired. 
- **Chronic fatigue syndrome** - (myalgic encephalomyelitis, or ME) is a severe & disabling tiredness that goes on for at least six months. 
- **Diabetes** - one of the main symptoms is feeling very tired.
- **Food intolerance**, e.g. Coeliac disease, where the body reacts badly when you eat gluten – a substance found in bread, cakes and cereals.
- A sleeping disorder called **sleep apnoea** a condition where the throat narrows / closes during sleep and repeatedly interrupts breathing. It's most common in overweight middle-aged men. Drinking alcohol and smoking makes it worse. 
- **Restless legs** - uncomfortable sensations in your legs, causing disturbed sleep.
- **Glandular fever** - a common viral infection that causes fatigue, fever, sore throat and swollen glands.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL CAUSES

- Mental health problems such as depression or anxiety can cause tiredness. 
- They can also prevent you from getting a proper night's sleep.
- If you think your tiredness may be rooted in low mood, try this short audio guide: <http://www.nhs.uk/Video/Pages/sleep-problems-podcast.aspx>

### LIFESTYLE CAUSES

Tiredness can often be attributed to:

- Having a bad diet.
- Drinking too much alcohol.

If you drink alcohol in the evening, it tends to wake you in the middle of the night. Also, if you drink a lot regularly, it can make you depressed and affect your sleep. Do you suffer from hangover symptoms? <https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-facts/health-effects-of-alcohol/hangovers/hangover-symptoms/>

Disturbed sleep patterns due to shift work, socialising late at night or looking after young children can make it difficult to get a good night's sleep.



## Sleep disturbances can lead to a 'SLEEP DEBT' and fatigue

### How to catch up on lost sleep

If you don't get enough sleep, there's only one way to compensate – getting more sleep. It won't happen with a single early night. If you've had months of restricted sleep, you'll have built up a significant sleep debt, so expect recovery to take several weeks.

Starting on a weekend, try to add on an extra hour or two of sleep a night. The way to do this is to go to bed when you're tired, and allow your body to wake you in the morning (no alarm clocks allowed!).

Follow the sleep improvement plan link: <https://www.sleepio.com/onboarding-sleep-test/#/?k=ezmgug>



## THE ENERGY DIET

The best way to eat if you want to banish tiredness is to have a healthy, balanced diet that contains foods from the four main food groups in the right proportions.

The four food groups are:

1. Fruit and vegetables
2. Potatoes, bread, rice, pasta and other starchy foods
3. Milk and dairy foods
4. Beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other non-dairy sources of protein



Eat at regular intervals. Try to eat 3 meals a day & limit snacks [especially high-fat ones] between meals. Your body knows when your next meal is coming & learns to manage feelings of hunger & sustain energy levels.



Breakfast boosts your energy.

One-third of us regularly skip breakfast. Go for healthier options, e.g. porridge with fruit, vegetable omelette, or wholemeal toast with a scraping of low-fat spread or jam. If you can't face eating as soon as you get up, take a highfibre snack to eat on the run, rather than snacking on high-sugar or high-fat foods.



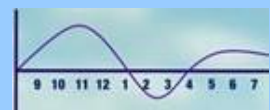
Aim for at least 5 A DAY for more vitality. Most people in the UK eat too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fruit and vegetables. Try to incorporate at least five portions of a variety of fruit and veg into your daily diet. They can be fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juiced.



Slow-burning starches give sustained energy. Starchy foods - also called carbohydrates - such as potatoes, bread, cereals and pasta should make up just over a third of everything you eat. Go for slow-burning wholegrain or wholemeal varieties, as they release energy gradually.



Sugar steals your stamina. Adults and children in the UK eat too much sugar. Sugar gives you a rush of energy, but one that wears off quickly. There are natural sugars in lots of foods, including fruit and veg, and you don't need to avoid these. It's a good idea to cut down on foods such as sweets, cakes, biscuits, non-diet fizzy drinks and chocolates.



Eat Iron-rich foods to prevent fatigue. While red meats, green vegetables and fortified foods such as breakfast cereals are good sources of iron, the important thing is to eat a range of foods to get enough iron.



Non-alcoholic drinks boost zest levels. Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids - the government recommends 6-8 glasses daily.



Eat enough to pack a punch. Make sure you eat the right amount for your activity level. In general the average man needs around 2,500 calories a day, and the average woman needs 2,000 calories.

## ENERGY STEALERS

- **Being a couch potato.** Sitting in one position for long periods can sap energy. **Solution:** stretch often, get up and walk around away from your desk or sofa. Frequent breaks keep your body alert.
- **Poor posture wastes energy.** The more out of balance your spine is, the more your muscles have to work to compensate. **Solution:** try to make sure that your head is lined up over your body. Aim for your ears to be directly over your shoulders.
- **Crash dieting makes you tired.** Very low-calorie diets, especially ones that give you less than 850 calories a day, will make you feel tired. **Solution:** lose weight by eating healthily, cut out junk / sugary foods, & reduce portion size. Aim to lose no more than 2lbs a week, <http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Documents/WEIGHT-LOSS-PACK/all-weeks.pdf>
- **Cabin fever.** It's easy to become homebound, e.g. if you work from home. Lack of light and fresh air is a key cause of tiredness. Less sunlight in winter also means your brain produces more of a hormone called melatonin, which makes you sleepy. **Solution:** get out for a 10-minute walk at least once during the day, or when you're most tired, even if it's cloudy.
- **Constant worrying drains energy.** Worrying all day long, means your heart rate and blood pressure rise, muscles tighten, leading to fatigue and aches. **Solution:** try to think of positive solutions. Follow the link for talking therapies: [http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/Psychologicaltherapies-\(IAPT\)/LocationSearch/10008](http://www.nhs.uk/service-search/Psychologicaltherapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008)
- **Exercising too much.** **Solution:** take a day off between strenuous bouts of exercise. Beware of leaving more than 2 or 3 days between sessions, or you might fall out of the habit.

