

Managing your Energy

We hope to answer your concerns, but if you have any more questions please ask a member of staff

Why do I feel more tired/fatigued?

Fatigue or tiredness can be a common symptom in many serious illnesses such as cancer, respiratory disease or heart failure, especially when you are experiencing breathlessness too. Tiredness makes you feel less motivated to keep active, which means that you may avoid your usual activities. This can lead to you having less energy, which in turn can make you more tired. When this behaviour becomes a habit, the cycle can often be difficult to break. When you have a condition that affects your lungs, it becomes more difficult to breathe and this extra effort uses up more energy.

We cannot take away your tiredness completely, but there are a number of ways in which you can manage it, which in turn may help you to continue to do some of the things that you would like to do.

What can I do to help my fatigue?

It is important to keep a balance between activity and rest and to vary the type of activities that you do in your day. Decide on your priorities so that you use your energy on the things that you really want to do.

Energy levels

Learn to understand your energy levels and try to get to know where your limits lie. Think about it in terms of having a fixed amount of energy to use each day, some people imagine this to be a glass of energy, or liken it to a battery. This energy can be topped up through rest/sleep. Consider what you would like to use your energy on, but always leave something in the glass. Even if you make the best plans, there is always a chance that something unexpected might crop up that uses more energy. It is good to keep some energy in reserve.

Monitoring your energy

It is often useful to keep track of the activities that you do within your day and week and monitor how you are feeling at different times. This might enable you to see if there are any patterns and if there are any times of the day and week which are better or worse for you.

Conserving your energy

It is important to try not to use up any energy unnecessarily and there are many ways in which you can do this. You might do things in a slightly different way which takes less effort or ask someone else to help.

When thinking about how to save your energy it might be helpful to consider the following things:

Planning

Considering which times of the day are best for you and plan activities around this time. Try to space activities out during the week and not concentrate all activities into one day.

Pacing

Slow down your activities as this will take less energy. Slow down when you talk, laugh, eat or cough – these actions can affect your breathing pattern. Break down your activities into smaller tasks that are more manageable. Allow yourself some time each day to try to relax. Remember that it is better to take a little extra time to complete one task and be able to continue, than to finish one task quickly and feel too tired to continue.

Positioning

Try to avoid too much bending and twisting, which can be tiring. Try to organise your home so that frequently used items are readily to hand. It takes less effort to push, pull or slide objects so try to avoid lifting heavy things.

Prioritising

Identify which activities are most important to you. Sometimes it can help to write everything down that you would like or need to do. Then think about whether these activities are high, medium or low priority for you. When planning what activities, you are going to do, concentrate on the high priority things first and then work your way through to the medium priority activities. It might be that you do not get around to doing the low priority activities or that you allow family or friends to do them.

Permission

Allow yourself to do things in a different way that helps with your energy levels. Try to be patient with yourself and give yourself time to do things. It is not helpful to dwell on the things that you could do or the way in which you could do them before your energy levels were limited. Try to recognise the things that you are achieving. Be kind to yourself, its ok to say 'no' to things sometimes.

How active should I be?

It is important to stay as active as you can. This will prevent your muscles becoming weaker. Get a balance between activity and rest. A little gentle exercise each day can make all the difference. Regular exercise has been shown to help with fatigue as it will help maintain your strength to deal with daily activities.

Rest and Relaxation

If you are not sleeping at night, try not to sleep during the day. If you need to sleep during the day, try to keep this down to a short nap rather than a prolonged sleep.

Take time to practice relaxation – see Relaxation and Mindfulness factsheets. See also Managing fatigue with Occupational Therapy, Relaxation and Mindfulness factsheets.

Suggestions to help make your life easier

Around the home

- Keep things you use frequently close to hand
- Sit for activities if possible as this uses less energy
- Use labour-saving equipment and delegate heavier tasks
- Divide heavy washing into smaller loads
- Sit on a stool rather than bending
- Consider the height of your bed, chair and toilet – struggling to get up from low furniture wastes energy

Shopping

- Allow others to help with heavier shopping
- Apply for a Blue Badge so you can park near to the shops
- Pick quieter times to go shopping
- Always use a trolley which you can use to support your upper body
- Try internet shopping.

Grooming/dressing

- Gather all you need before you start
- Do as much as possible while sitting
- Avoid aerosols and strong perfumes
- Wear loose fitting, easy to put on comfortable clothes with front fastenings to reduce twisting and reaching
- Dress the lower half of your body first, as this requires the most energy
- Minimise bending. When putting on socks bring your foot up to the opposite knee (if possible). Rest your leg on bed/stool.
- Take your time, no need to rush (see pacing section)

Walking and climbing stairs

- Move at a comfortable pace and breathe steadily. Avoid holding your breath or trying to move too fast.
- Pace your breathing to your steps; breathe in over one step, breathe out over the next two steps.
- Use walking aids if they help you.
- Use the handrail when climbing stairs
- Stop and rest whenever you need to. Have resting points at the top and bottom of the stairs
- Avoid unnecessary journeys up and down stairs

Eating and drinking

- Have frequent small meals, rather than one large one
- Eat smaller mouthfuls
- Avoid foods that are difficult to chew, add sauces when possible
- Drink sips of fluid frequently to avoid
- Consider using frozen or pre-prepared foods

This leaflet is updated regularly. For the most up to date information please visit <https://loros.co.uk/our-care>.

In cases of comments or complaints, please contact:

Chief Executive, or Director of Care Services, LOROS, Groby Road, Leicester LE3 9QE or, Care Quality Commission, East Midlands Office, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 4PA

If you would like this information in another language or format please telephone 0116 231 8435 or email info@loros.co.uk

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Produced: August 2025 Review: August 2028

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