



Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre

Information Sheet

Coping with Fatigue

What is fatigue?

To healthy people, fatigue is usually caused by a few late nights or excessive physical exertion, quickly alleviated by a nap or a good night's sleep. For some with FMS, however, fatigue can be an all-encompassing blanket of exhaustion. It may come and go, but sleep or rest does not restore a vigorous, alert state. In fact, sleep is of poor quality and perpetuates the feeling of tiredness.

Managing fatigue means walking a fine line between doing too much and doing too little. Many people with FMS push themselves so hard that they make themselves worse. Others surrender to the exhaustion and give up activity altogether. They, too, only increase their fatigue through inactivity.

The following is about finding the proper balance. You probably won't be able to eliminate fatigue completely, but you can lessen it, by setting priorities and conserving your strength for what is most important to you.

Setting Priorities

To get a clearer image of what is important to you, develop a "To Do" list. List what you have to do during a typical week, and then rate how important each activity is. You might try a simple scale like A = must be done; B = should be done; or C = could be done.

Look at your daily routine and responsibilities in light of your current energy level and then ask yourselves these questions:

- What is most important to you personally; think in terms of family, work, friends, church and hobbies.
- What activities are relevant to the priorities you've identified?
- What must you accomplish?
- What can you eliminate?
- What can you ask others to do?
- What can be modified or simplified?
- What can you say no to? Sometimes this may mean saying no to yourself, as well as to other people?

Pacing yourself

No matter how well you have prioritised, if you don't pace yourself properly, you may not have the energy to carry out your plan. Estimate your energy level realistically, and allow for adjustments as your FMS worsens or improves. Here are some tips.

1. Take breaks between tasks, before you get too tired. A ratio of 10 minutes of rest to 50 minutes of activity works well for many. When your FMS is more active, rest longer and more frequently.
2. Alternate light and heavy tasks, doing the toughest jobs when you're feeling your best. Stick to the time you'd planned to work and then, quit!
3. Avoid rushing. You'll be more efficient at a comfortable pace than on a hectic schedule that invites mistakes and accidents. Allow time for the unexpected.
4. Divide big jobs into little ones.
5. Avoid activities that tax you beyond endurance. For some people, that might mean the Sydney to Surf marathon. For others, it's the monster truck rally your husband insists you'll enjoy. **JUST SAY NO.**

From "Your personal Guide to living well with Fibromyalgia"
Publication of the Arthritis Foundation Publisher; Long street Press; Edition 1 (May1, 1997)

© ARRC 2016

The Autoimmune Resource and Research Centre (ARRC) is a Not for Profit registered health promotion charity.

ARRC provides education, support and research services for people living with a range of systemic and organ-specific autoimmune diseases. For more information, education and support contact ARRC

www.autoimmune.org.au

HNELHD-arrc@health.nsw.gov.au

Pathology North Bldg, John Hunter Hospital, New Lambton Heights NSW Australia 2305

ARRC information for patients, carers & Health Professionals

Disclaimer

This document has been developed and peer reviewed by ARRC and is based on expert opinion and the available published literature at the time of review. Information contained in this document is not intended to replace medical advice and any questions regarding a medical diagnosis or treatment should be directed to a medical practitioner. The development of this document is not funded by any commercial sources and is not influenced by commercial organisations. For more information about ARRC and its *policies & procedures* please refer to our website.

Content last updated July 2016

Reviewed by Judy Knapp, Clinical Trial Nurse

