

Fatigue

What is fatigue?

Everyone feels tired now and then. But if you feel tired for several weeks and it doesn't get better, you may have a kind of extreme tiredness called **fatigue** [fah-TEEG]. Sometimes, fatigue can be a sign of a serious medical problem. It's important to talk with your doctor to figure out what is causing your fatigue.

What causes fatigue?

Many things can cause extreme tiredness, including:

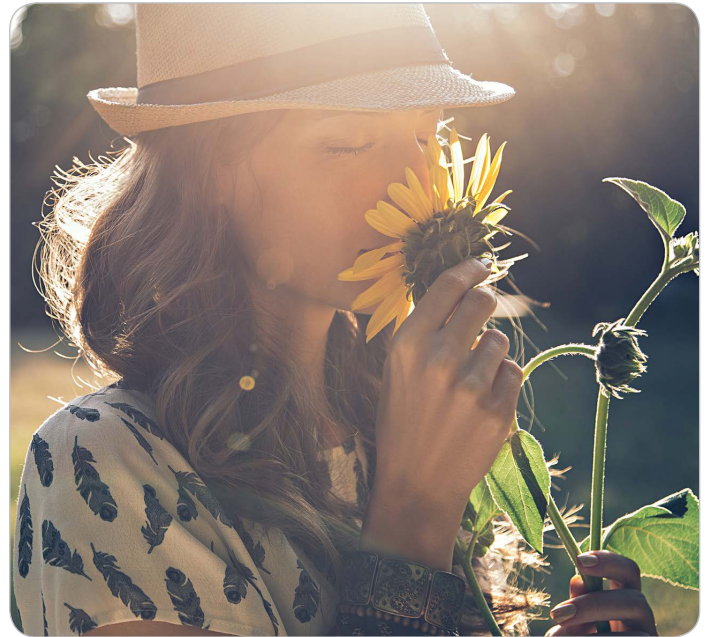
- An undiagnosed medical condition
- Depression, anxiety, or high levels of stress
- Not enough sleep
- Pregnancy
- Certain medications
- Recent surgery or certain medical treatments, such as chemotherapy
- Chronic fatigue syndrome

Chronic fatigue syndrome

Chronic fatigue syndrome, also known as myalgic [my-AL-jik] encephalomyelitis [en-sef-uh-low-my-uh-LIE-tuss], is a long-term illness that can cause severe fatigue, sleep problems, pain, difficulty thinking, and other problems. Doctors are not sure what causes this syndrome. It is more common in women than men and often starts in middle age (40 to 60 years old).

Chronic fatigue syndrome is diagnosed by ruling out other conditions with similar symptoms. If your doctor thinks you may have chronic fatigue syndrome, they will do a physical exam, ask about your symptoms and medical history, and order blood and urine tests.

There is no cure for chronic fatigue syndrome, but some of the symptoms can be managed.



What can I do to help reduce fatigue?

Depending on the cause of your fatigue, a healthy lifestyle can help you feel better and get you back to your everyday activities. As much as possible, try to:

- **Get some exercise.** Thirty minutes of moderate exercise on most days is a good goal for many people, but talk with your doctor about what is best for you.
- **Get enough sleep.** Most adults need at least 7 or 8 hours each night.
- **Eat a healthy, balanced diet** with lots of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- **Avoid or limit caffeine and alcohol.** They can keep you from sleeping well.
- **Find healthy ways to manage stress**, such as writing in a journal, meditating, or doing yoga.
- **Get involved in activities that connect you with others**, like social events or volunteering.

