

# Fatigue management



Fatigue, often described as an overwhelming sense of physical and mental tiredness, is the most reported debilitating symptom experienced by those with Long COVID.

**Physical fatigue:** you may find that when you're fatigued, your body feels overwhelmingly heavy and that even small movements take an enormous amount of energy.

**Mental and cognitive fatigue:** you may find that when you're fatigued, it becomes difficult to think, concentrate or take in new information and that your memory and learning are affected. Even basic word-finding and problem-solving might be difficult for you.

Fatigue may leave you feeling exhausted after completing your usual tasks, and you may wake up feeling as tired as when you went to sleep. Your fatigue levels may change from week to week, day to day or hour to hour. You may have little motivation to do anything because you're so tired and/or know that undertaking the smallest task will leave you exhausted.

If you feel like this, the following strategies may be helpful:

- **Adjust your expectations** for what you can do in a day. Set realistic goals based on how you are feeling. When you are very tired, breathless, or weak, even getting out of bed, washing, and dressing can be achievements.
- **Save your energy** by doing tasks sitting down when you can, such as when showering, dressing, or preparing food. Try not to do tasks that need you to stand, bend down, reach high, or squat for a long time.
- **Pace yourself** and try to do light tasks between heavier ones. You may need to leave yourself time during the day to rest.
- **Let others help you** with tasks that you may be struggling with. Things like caring for children, shopping, preparing meals, or driving may be difficult. Accept offers of support and let people know what they can help you with. Services that can help with activities, such as shopping or cooking, may also be useful while you are still recovering.
- **Ease back into activities.** Do not try to take up full activities until you feel ready. This may mean talking to an employer about a gradual return to work, taking on a role that is easier for you to manage, getting support for childcare, and returning to hobbies slowly.