

Tiredness

Overcoming Chronic Fatigue and Low Vitality

Fatigue and low energy are common complaints in modern life. Indeed, up to 24 percent of all people visiting the doctor say they always feel tired. Chronic fatigue and low energy can be triggered by many different factors. Understanding these influences is an important first step in solving the riddle. Some potential contributors to fatigue are listed below.

ANTIBIOTIC OVERUSE

Research at the University of California at San Francisco and elsewhere, suggests that people with chronic fatigue are more likely to have a history of chronic antibiotic overuse as a child, adolescent, or adult. Excessive antibiotic exposure may disrupt digestion and absorption of nutrients, alter immune function, alter the balance of intestinal bacteria, contribute to yeast overgrowth, and other problems.

BLOOD SUGAR DISORDERS

The two most common blood sugar disorders, diabetes and hypoglycemia are both associated with fatigue. Diabetes can be ruled out with blood and urine tests. Hypoglycemia is often suspected when energy drops three to five hours after a meal. Both are responsive to nutrient supplementation, dietary changes, and exercises though diabetes sometimes requires drug therapy. Assessment of vitamin and mineral status is important since several nutrients play key roles in regulation of blood sugar.

DIGESTIVE DISTURBANCE

Digestive problems are very common in modern cultures and may contribute to fatigue. When changes in stomach acid, digestive enzymes, intestinal bacteria, and other problems occur, it affects the fundamental way in which our food and nutrients are used. Irritable bowel syndrome is one such digestive condition, affecting a high percentage of adults who live on typical Western diets. Its hallmark symptoms include constipation or diarrhea, nausea, a sense of urgency, bloating. It sometimes runs in families. Factors that trigger may include low fiber diet, food allergies, use of certain pain relieving drugs, antibiotic overuse, milk intolerance, parasitic infection, overgrowth of intestinal bacteria, and stress.

DISEASE

Fatigue can be one of the early signs of heart disease, lung disease, neurological disease, kidney disease, liver

disease, cancer or other disease processes. For this reason, it is important to have a thorough physical examination to rule out serious problems.

FIBROMYALGIA SYNDROME

Fibromyalgia is characterized by chronic neck, shoulder, hip and back pain. It is also not uncommon to have symptoms of irritable bowel, shortness of breath, sleep difficulty, morning stiffness, tension headaches, and sensitivity to cold and heat. Chronic fatigue is present in more than 90 percent of people with fibromyalgia. Treatment involves a multidisciplinary approach that may include dietary management, nutritional therapy, spinal manipulation, counseling, massage, medication (though common pain relievers are of little benefit), exercise, stretching, and social support.

FITNESS

Fatigue and low energy are often the result of inadequate physical activity. By participating in an exercise program many people experience improved energy.

INFECTION

Chronic fatigue may be one residual effect of an acute infection. It may also be the result of a chronic or hidden infection. Among these are Herpes virus, Cytomegalovirus, Epstein-Barr virus (associated with mononucleosis), Borrelia burgdorferi (associated with Lyme Disease), yeast infection (such as Candida albicans) fungal infection, tuberculosis, and parasites such as Giardia lamblia.

NUTRIENT INSUFFICIENCY

Vitamins, mineral, essential fatty acids, and accessory nutrients are what fuel the machinery that provides energy. There are many places in the energy production process where nutrient insufficiency can trip it up, resulting in fatigue. Nutrient insufficiencies that have been associated with chronic fatigue and low energy include (but are not limited to):

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| Coenzyme Q10 | Magnesium |
| Vitamin B1 | Vitamin B12 |
| Vitamin B6 | Folic Acid |
| Carnitine | Fatty Acids |
| Iron | Amino Acids |
| Vitamin C | Glutathione |

PRESCRIPTION

Many prescription drugs can contribute to fatigue and chronic tiredness. Some drugs contribute to fatigue by causing nutrient insufficiency. Check with your doctor or pharmacist regarding the possible relationship. Do NOT change drugs without consulting your medical doctor.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Inadequate sleep can lead to chronic fatigue. Sleep difficulties can be caused by many different influences such as shift work, inadequate physical activity, chronic disease, chemical exposure, nutrient insufficiency, sleep apnea, diet, prescription drugs, poor sleeping posture, muscle tension, depression, or seasonal light deficiency.

THYROID AND ADRENAL PROBLEMS

Abnormal thyroid function can lead to fatigue. Paradoxically, both under active and overactive thyroid can contribute to poor energy production. The adrenal glands produce important substances that can become elevated or depressed when one is under stress. Some of these same substances also change with age. Over time, exhausted adrenal glands can cause one to suffer from chronic fatigue and low energy.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

There are at least three basic processes by which food may contribute to fatigue. Food allergy or food intolerance may contribute to fatigue. This can be ruled out with appropriate tests. Properly designed elimination diets can be very helpful. Food additive or contaminants may cause fatigue in sensitive individuals. Food combination may affect mood. High carbohydrate diets sometimes increase release of the calming neurotransmitter serotonin, which can lead to sleepiness or sluggishness. High fat meals can slow digestion, divert blood flow from the brain to the stomach, and contribute to fatigue.

TOXICITY

A growing number of doctors have observed toxicity to be an important element in the complaints of their fatigued patients. When toxicity is coupled with nutrient insufficiency, the effect on energy production and body function can become significant. Avoidance of offending agents, coupled with a nutritional program designed to improve detoxification and correct nutrient deficiency, are often needed to remedy fatigue of this nature.

POSTURE AND BODY MECHANICS

The human body expends an enormous amount of energy to maintain itself in space. Changes in posture (sleeping, sitting or standing) can place additional demands on the muscles as they attempt to compensate. High heels can contribute to fatigue in women and may actually increase

oxygen demand. Spinal manipulation or adjustment, massage, and postural retraining can help alleviate fatigue due to altered body mechanics.

FINDING THE CAUSE AND SOLUTION

It may seem, from the above discussion, that there are an overwhelming number of possible contributors to chronic fatigue and low energy. On the surface, this may appear to be true. However, one might also look at it in the positive. If you have suffered from fatigue for some time and have not found the right formula for success, you may now see many new options available to you. The question becomes, "How does one go about narrowing things down and then embark on an effective healing program?"

An effective strategy might be to gather all the information about your condition that you can and then work with a health professional to find the simplest, yet most comprehensive solution that works for you. For each of the above factors, rational strategies exist to help unlock the mystery of chronic fatigue and low energy.

NATURAL HEALTH CARE AND CHRONIC FATIGUE

Increasingly, people are turning to forms of health care that minimize the use of drugs and optimize the use of natural substances and non-invasive methods. A growing number of doctors are beginning to ask the question "What can we do to improve function," rather than "What medication can we give to relieve the symptoms." Chronic fatigue due to certain causes may require drug or even surgical intervention. However, by taking a functional approach to this problem one can often arrive at solutions that are drug-free, while optimizing the healing process.