



Photo by Sebastian Unrau on Unsplash



Northern Health Palliative Care

Fatigue – Tips for Personal Support Workers

- People with progressive life-limiting illnesses may feel **fatigue, or loss of energy**, without having consciously used any energy.
- Fatigue without exertion can be **an early sign of illness** and usually becomes more obvious as disease progresses.
- **Causes of fatigue:** Disease, treatment, medication, decreased intake, weight loss, stress, sleep disturbance, depression, fears, anxiety and pain.
- **Adapt the care plan and individualize comfort measures** to meet the person’s changing energy levels as their disease progresses.

Preventive	In the Moment	For the Family
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be alert for signs of fatigue: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inability to complete ADLs and other usual tasks. ○ Having slept/rested but without feeling energized. ○ May express: <i>I’m still so tired.</i>” • When a person’s strength and abilities decrease: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assist with ADL & transfer. ○ Assist with pacing their daily plans. ○ Encourage exercise early in the disease process as a way to increase energy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen and acknowledge the person’s/family’s sense of frustration and limitation. • Be mindful of person’s energy when providing care. • Be flexible in providing care. • Reschedule planned treatments and activities. • Offer a meal in bed. • Offer a small snack. • Suggest relaxing activities: e.g., listening to music. • Suggest options that could improve sleep – e.g., therapeutic touch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help family understand person’s changing energy levels. • Work with family to plan appropriate activities and caregiving. • Listen and acknowledge their fears and concerns. • Report their concerns to nurse – e.g., fatigue is caused by medications. • Invite family to help with ADLs. • Share information about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Helping loved one without <i>“doing it all”</i> for them. ○ Being open to adapt plans. ○ Being mindful of person’s energy and needs when visiting. ○ Asking nurse for more information about fatigue.