



MS Fatigue: How To Fight Fatigue With MS

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Fatigue is a very common [symptom of multiple sclerosis](#) (MS) and can be a disabling and frustrating symptom with a huge impact on quality of life.

[Between 75 percent and 95 percent](#) of people with MS experience fatigue

MS experience fatigue.

How Is MS Fatigue Different From Normal Fatigue?

Fatigue in MS is different in many ways from the tiredness people may experience as the result of a long day at work or a late night out. Fatigue is also different from sleepiness, although staying in bed may be the only thing that seems to help at times. According to the [National Multiple Sclerosis Society](#), people with MS commonly experience fatigue that persists daily, even after plenty of sleep, and worsens as the day goes on.

According to the National MS Society, people with MS commonly experience fatigue:



Nearly every day



In the morning even after plenty of sleep



Worsening throughout the day



Starting suddenly



Worsening with hot weather or humidity

When fatigue affects people with MS in these ways, it may also be referred to as lassitude. MS fatigue is typically more severe than normal fatigue, and may interfere with work, school, and tasks of daily life. In fact, MS fatigue is a [primary reason](#) people with MS have to reduce work hours or stop working altogether.

What Does MS Fatigue Feel Like?

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Members of MyMSTeam describe chronic, profound fatigue that does not usually improve with a nap or a cup of coffee. Here are some descriptions of MS fatigue from members in their own words:

- “My body just shuts down.”
- “Utter weariness.”
- “Everything just feels slow.”
- “Like taking three sleeping pills and still trying to

function normally.”

- “My brain and body just stop working.”
- “I’ll crawl at times, sit on the floor, then I can get up and take a few more steps.”
- “Bone-crushing fatigue.”
- “Fatigue is a never-ending battle.”

MyMSTeam members also discuss how MS fatigue affects their relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners. Members describe disappointment and resentment from loved ones who do not understand how severe and unrelenting their fatigue from multiple sclerosis can be.

Brain fog and multiple sclerosis: [symptoms, causes, and treatments](#)

What Causes Fatigue in Multiple Sclerosis?

Researchers are not yet certain what causes fatigue in people with MS, but a [recent review of research](#) indicates that inflammation, other immune system processes, and lesions in the grey matter of the brain all likely play a role in MS fatigue. In multiple sclerosis, [myelin](#) (insulation that protects nerves) is damaged, causing disruptions to connections in the central nervous system (the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerve). As a result, in someone with MS, it takes more effort for the brain to relay messages and

coordinate movement. All of these factors are believed to play a role in MS fatigue.

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Inflammation



Immune system processes



Lesions in grey matter



Damaged Myelin

Of course, people with multiple sclerosis can also experience fatigue from other causes. For instance, fatigue can be a side effect of some medications. When the body is fighting an infection, fatigue is often a consequence. [About half of people with MS](#) experience depression at some point, and [depression can worsen MS fatigue](#) as well as directly cause fatigue. Other MS symptoms, including [leg weakness](#) and [muscle weakness](#), can add to the burden of MS fatigue.

Ways To Fight MS Fatigue

Some people with MS are able to improve their MS fatigue by using medications or other approaches, such as increasing exercise or using energy-conserving techniques.

Medications To Treat MS Fatigue





There are several types of medications that are sometimes prescribed to help manage fatigue in people with multiple sclerosis. Members of MyMSTeam report varying degrees of effectiveness. Like all medications, drugs prescribed for MS fatigue can also cause side effects.

More than 2,400 members of MyMSTeam indicate that they have taken [Symmetrel](#) (Amantadine). Amantadine is used to treat influenza and Parkinson's disease, and researchers are unsure how it works to manage MS fatigue. [Provigil](#) (Modafinil) is a wakefulness-promoting drug often prescribed for those with narcolepsy. Nuvigil (Armodafinil) is a very similar medication that is usually taken once a day.

Stimulants like [Adderall](#) (Amphetamine/Dextroamphetamine), [Ritalin](#) (Methylphenidate), and [Concerta](#) (Methylphenidate) can also be used to treat MS fatigue — although there is not good evidence that these work long-term.

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Other Approaches To Managing Fatigue in MS



Exercise can have many [benefits for people with MS](#). It may include improving fatigue as well as strength, flexibility, balance, cognition, mood, and bladder function. Tai chi, yoga, and water-based exercises are among the types of physical activity suggested for people with MS. Always talk to your doctor before beginning a new [exercise](#) regimen.

Some people with MS find that fatigue worsens with heat. Keeping cool as much as possible may help with MS fatigue. Some people with MS find cooling equipment such as scarves, fans, and vests to be helpful. The Multiple Sclerosis Association of America offers a [program to distribute cooling equipment](#) to

people with MS for free.

Some members of MyMSTeam report worse fatigue when they smoke cigarettes. According to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, [smoking](#) can also affect the way MS medications work and hasten the progression from a relapsing to progressive [type of MS](#).

Some MyMSTeam members say they feel better when they take nutritional supplements, such as vitamins or herbal products. Before adding any new supplement to your diet, talk to your doctor first. Some supplements can cause dangerous interactions with medications.

Many people with MS fatigue learn to use energy-conserving techniques. The Multiple Sclerosis Association of America recommends [energy-saving tactics](#) including:

- Scheduling tasks for the time of day with the highest energy level
- Breaking tasks into smaller subtasks and taking them one at a time
- Planning ahead to have supplies ready in place when needed for tasks

You Are Not Alone With MS Fatigue



On MyMSTeam, the social network and online support group for those living



with multiple sclerosis, members talk about a range of personal experiences. Coping with MS fatigue is one of the most popular topics.

Is a daily struggle with fatigue part of your life with MS? How do you manage your MS fatigue? Share your experiences with fatigue in the comments below or by posting on [MyMSTeam](#).

References ▶

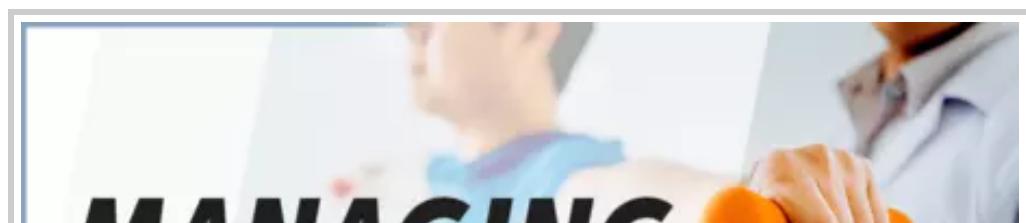
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