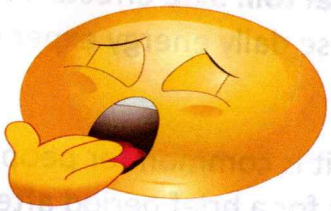
Post-Stroke Fatigue



What is Post-Stroke Fatigue? Am I Just Lazy?

- Post-stroke fatigue is an overwhelming, persistent exhaustion that does not simply go away with regular rest.
- It affects **up to 70% of stroke survivors** and can last for weeks, months, or even years.

How is Post-Stroke Fatigue Different Than Being Tired?

- It is a deep physical and mental weariness where everyday tasks like talking, walking, or focusing require an exhausting amount of cognitive effort.
- Survivors often describe "hitting a wall" suddenly, and standard sleep does not fix the exhaustion.
- It is not laziness!

Common Causes

- **Brain healing and neuroplastic inefficiency:** After a stroke the brain works much harder to reroute signals and perform actions that used to be automatic
- **Sleep disorders:** Conditions like sleep apnea, insomnia, or daytime sleepiness frequently co-occur.
- **Emotional factors:** Depression, anxiety, and frustration heavily drain emotional and physical energy.

- **Medications and physical toll:** Side effects from drugs, chronic pain, or muscle weakness increase daily energy expenditure.

- **Post-Stroke Therapies:** it is common for people to feel fatigue and see a worsening of symptoms for a brief period after a therapy session. Several factors play a role in this, including:

    - **Cognitive and Motor Overload:** therapies are designed to force damaged brain pathways to work hard. Just like a tired muscle after a heavy workout, the brain needs rest after intense therapy tasks.

    - **Stress and frustration:** Struggling to find words, focus/attention for extended periods of time, complete motor tasks, complete communication exercises, etc. can raise stress levels without you being aware of it. Besides the treatment itself factors such as hearing loss, loud and busy environments, and focused concentration can all increase stress, as the brain functions to manage these factors. Stress releases hormones like cortisol that temporarily block clear thinking and communicating, while your brain rests.

    - **Temporary depletion:** The small amount of extra energy available for the brain's ability to rewire itself, called neuroplasticity, gets used up during the session, leading to a temporary increase in fatigue right after a session.

    - **Brain and Muscle Fatigue:** Just like lifting heavy weights until your arms shake and feel weaker temporarily, the brain's motor, language, hearing, speech-planning centers and vocal tract “muscles” get exhausted from a "workout" during a session.

    - **Processing Overload:** Immediately following session, the neural pathways are temporarily depleted or overloaded, leading to a brief window where speech and movement may feel more choppy, hesitant, or strained before resting allows recovery.

Management and Coping Strategies

- **Energy conservation:** Pace demanding activities throughout the day and ***plan scheduled rest*** breaks **BEFORE** becoming totally depleted.
- **Track triggers:** Use a daily journal to note when energy crashes happen and **adjust** your routine accordingly.
- **Improve sleep hygiene:** Keep a consistent sleep schedule and limit screens, caffeine, and alcohol before bedtime.
- **Multidisciplinary care:** Consult your doctor to review medications, evaluate sleep issues, and design an approved physical activity plan. Tell your therapists if you experience fatigue.

You are not lazy BUT you do need to listen to your body and take responsibility for adjusting to and reporting these changes! Post-Stroke Fatigue can and should be managed by you and your team!

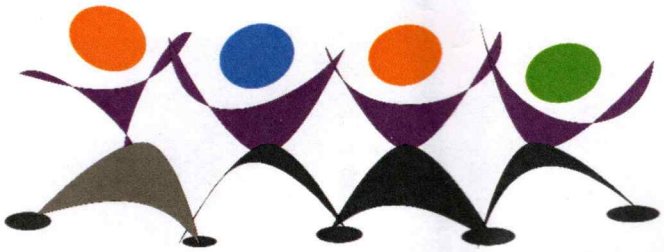


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