



# TIPS FOR IDENTIFYING, MANAGING, AND DISCUSSING FATIGUE IN PARKINSON'S DISEASE



## What is fatigue?

- By fatigue we mean a sense of exhaustion, increased effort with day-to-day activities and lack of energy.
- This is distinct from sleepiness, apathy (loss of motivation), depression and cognitive impairment although fatigue may co-exist with these other symptoms.
- If sleepiness (excessive daytime somnolence) or depression are present you may want to treat these first as they can contribute to fatigue.

## What causes fatigue in Parkinson's?

- It is important that we don't miss other potential causes of fatigue. This can include anemia, vitamin deficiencies, certain medications, medical disorders (e.g. heart failure) or sleep disorders. You should talk to your doctor to make sure these conditions are not missed.
- If another condition is not present it is likely that your fatigue is from your Parkinson's. We do not yet know why people with Parkinson's develop fatigue but we do know that fatigue is very common (about 1/3 of people with PD) and disabling.

## What should I tell my doctor or family?

- It is important to let your doctor know that you are suffering from fatigue as this is an invisible symptom and they may not routinely ask about it.
- If your fatigue is associated with when you started a medication, certain times of the day, certain activities, or other symptoms (e.g. depression) this is important for your doctor to know.
- It is important that your family knows that fatigue can result from PD and does not mean that you are lazy or trying to not do things.

## What can I do to manage fatigue?

### Exercise



Some evidence that strength training, by building capacity, may be particularly helpful for fatigue but aerobic exercise can also be helpful.

It is important to do slowly graded exercise (e.g. increase by 5 minutes per week) to avoid rebound worsening of fatigue.

### Energy Management



Some people with PD report that focusing on an activity intensely can over-ride their fatigue (e.g. playing with a grandchild; taking an exercise class).

Some people report that a small snack can also help their energy.

Energy management strategies to suggest include: doing activities when you have your best energy (e.g. doing exercise in the morning); dividing activities into doable chunks; spreading your energy stores over the course of a day or week (budgeting your energy to accomplish what is most important to you).

Sleep hygiene at night and power naps in day can be helpful.

### Supplements

Supplements including caffeine, L- carnitine, creatine, and ginseng may be considered.

### Medications

Some medications (e.g. stimulants) can help fatigue in some people.

### Alternative Therapies

Acupuncture may be helpful.

### Mindfulness and CBT

This may also be helpful in managing and living with fatigue.