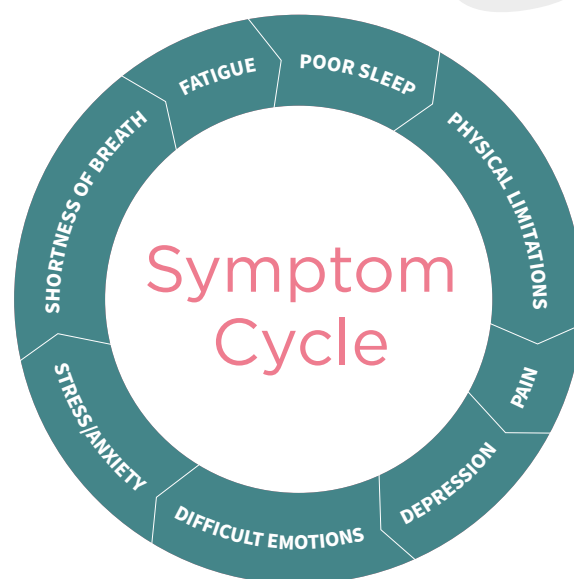


# Fatigue

This kete will help you to understand your fatigue and make a plan to manage it.



Fatigue can be caused by a number of different issues, including other symptoms such as stress or pain. These are often linked to each other. Because they are all connected they can make each other worse and turn into a symptom cycle.

## Breaking the cycle

Understanding that these are all connected is the first step in breaking the cycle. You might not be experiencing all these symptoms at the same time.

This kete has tools and resources that can help you find some things you can do to break the cycle, and make a plan to improve your fatigue.



Learn more at:  
[hn.org.nz](https://hn.org.nz)

**Book recommendation:**  
Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions,  
by Kate Lorig, et al. Bull Publishing, 2020.

# Fatigue



## What is it?

There are two types of fatigue:

### Physical fatigue

- ▶ Feeling low in energy, your body may feel heavy and you may feel like you have lost a lot of strength.
- ▶ Even small tasks, like walking to the bathroom, might take up a lot of energy.

### Mental/cognitive fatigue

- ▶ Your brain might feel foggy or cloudy, with even simple tasks feeling exhausting or difficult.
- ▶ You might find it hard to concentrate and focus on work tasks.

Fatigue can be experienced by people living with long-term conditions and is often experienced by people who have had a serious illness or been infected by a virus such as COVID-19.

This type of fatigue is different from the normal feeling of tiredness you get after doing a lot of work or exercise. It is also different from the tiredness you can feel when you are depressed and lacking motivation to do things.

Fatigue can occur even when you are rested and have had a good night's sleep. It can also occur after minimal effort and leave you feeling dull and finding it difficult to concentrate.

## What can I do about fatigue?

- ▶ Recognise and accept that your fatigue is real and be kind to yourself. Explain to your whānau and colleagues at work the impact your fatigue is having.
- ▶ Get a good night's sleep. Fatigue feels much worse if your sleep pattern is disturbed.
- ▶ Plan each day in advance and prioritise what's important to you. Delegate tasks to others or think of ways you can do things differently to save energy, such as online shopping for groceries. If you get stuck, try problem solving.
- ▶ Most importantly – pace yourself and avoid a 'boom or bust' approach to activity.



# Fatigue



## ► Pacing yourself.

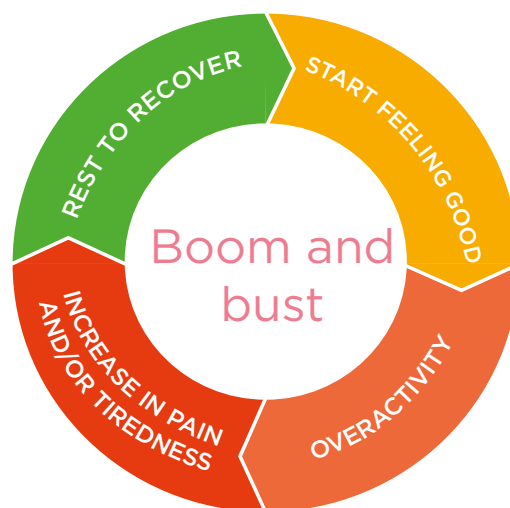
Pacing involves spreading your tasks evenly to avoid doing too much in one day.

Avoid falling into the overactivity/rest trap. You might think of this as boom and bust, or crashing after too much activity.

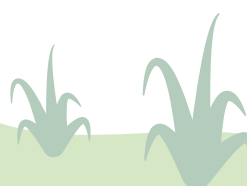
This is when one day you do much more than usual and the next day you feel exhausted. It can take a few days to recover and you end up feeling weaker than you did before.

The key thing is to pace yourself and do small amounts of different activities and rest in between.

- Keeping a symptom diary can help you keep track of how different activities affect you.
- Think about your overall wellbeing. Try the 5 ways to wellbeing and the relaxation and breathing techniques.
- Use the activity diary to build some of these into your week.
- Think about your mood, if you have feelings of sadness, anxiety or hopelessness as well as fatigue you may want to talk to a doctor or nurse.
- Keep active but remember to build up slowly to avoid falling into the boom and bust trap.
- Eat well, a healthy diet including a wide range of fruits, vegetables and protein can help. Keeping a food diary can help you keep track.



*Sometimes, doing too much too quickly stops you from achieving your long-term goals. Be prepared and think ahead, things can get in the way.*



# Sleep

Tips to improve your sleep.

- ▶ Without a good night's sleep, it can be hard to function properly. Poor sleep can make you feel tired and grumpy. The good news is there are things you can do to improve your sleep by making a few changes to your daily routine and habits.

## Set your body clock



- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, including weekends.
- Keep your daytime routine the same, even if you've had a poor night's sleep.
- Get out into bright light as soon as you wake up – light regulates your biological clock.

## Wind down at bedtime



- Relax before going to bed; try reading, having a bath or listening to music.
- Make your bedroom dark, cool and quiet and ensure that your bed is comfortable.
- Don't go to bed hungry. Drinking a warm glass of milk before bed may be helpful.
- Avoid heavy meals within 2 hours of bedtime as this can interrupt sleep.

## Keep your evenings stimulant-free



- Don't drink any caffeinated drinks within 6 hours of going to bed.
- Avoid smoking and drinking alcohol 2 hours before going to bed.
- Avoid using your computer, mobile phone and other electronic devices at least 30 minutes before going to bed.

## Go to bed when you're tired



- If you go to bed at the same time each night, you should start to feel sleepy at bedtime.
- If you're awake after 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing in another room.
- If you have things on your mind, write them down. Keep a pen and paper by your bed.

## Be active in the day



- Regular daytime exercise improves sleep.
- Avoid strenuous exercise within 3 hours of going to bed.

If you want to make some changes, you could try using the sleep tips tracker to keep a record of the things you are doing.

If you have on going sleeping problems, see your doctor for advice. There are treatments available.



Learn more at:  
[hn.org.nz/sleep](https://hn.org.nz/sleep)



# Sleep tips tracker



## To help you get a better night's sleep

Having difficulty sleeping? There are lots of things you can do to help get a better night's sleep. Use this form to record the things you are doing - remember the more of these you do, the more likely you are to get a good night's sleep.

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Did some exercise during the day							
Avoided napping during the day							
No caffeine within 6 hours of going to bed							
No physical exercise within 3 hours of going to bed							
No alcohol within 2 hours of going to bed							
No smoking within 2 hours of going to bed							
No heavy meals within 2 hours of going to bed							
No computer, mobile phones or other electronic device 30 minutes before going to bed							
Didn't go to bed hungry							
Relaxed before bedtime							
Put pen and paper by my bedside so I could write down things on my mind							
Set a bedtime routine and went to bed on time							
Got out of bed when awake in the night for more than 20 minutes							
Woke up on time							
<b>Rate 1 - 10 how good your sleep was</b>							

# Talking with family and friends

Talking about your feelings.

- ▶ Communication is very important for keeping families close and well-connected.
- ▶ Many couples and families go through life without talking much about their feelings or health problems they are struggling with.

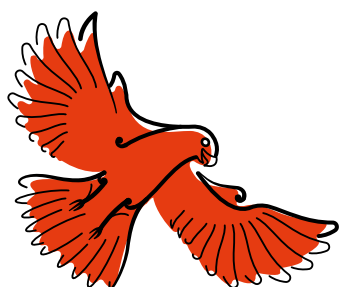
I want to tell them about how down I feel. Hiding it makes me feel lonely and sad but I'm worried. We never talk about our feelings.

It's such a relief not to keep all this to myself. I feel like I don't have to pretend I'm okay.

I wish Dad talked about how he's feeling. He seems so tired lately and I'm worried about him.

I need to make some changes. It'd be great to talk about this with you.

I'm worried about my husband's concentration, it could be good to talk about it and get some suggestions.



**Everyone needs to talk honestly about what they're feeling.**

Having honest conversations could reduce stress, make you feel closer to family and friends, and feel more supported.

**Whatever your reason - it's always good to talk and share ideas.**



# What would you like to talk about?

Think of a problem or issue you'd like to discuss.

Have a look at this example.



Who do you want to talk to? **MY WIFE SARAH.** .....

What do you want to talk about? **WHY I HAVE TROUBLE CONCENTRATING.** .....

.....

.....

► **Try it.** What works for you?

Who do you want to talk to? .....

What do you want to talk about? .....

.....

.....



Who do you want to talk to? .....

What do you want to talk about? .....

.....

.....

Who do you want to talk to? .....

What do you want to talk about? .....

.....

.....



# Relaxation

Relaxation is good for your health.

- ▶ Being able to relax is vital for good health.
- ▶ Life can get busy and we don't notice how tense or stressed we have become.

Are you relaxed?

1

### SHOULDERS

Are they up around your ears or relaxed? Push them up and then let them fall down.

2

### FOREHEAD

Is it creased and frowning? Or smooth and relaxed? Push your eyebrows up then let them fall into a relaxed position.

3

### JAWS

Are your teeth clenched? Let them come apart without opening your mouth. Feel your jaw muscle. Is it hard or relaxed? Let it go.

4

### TONGUE

Is it up against your front top teeth? Let it lie on the floor of your mouth.

5

### HANDS

Are they clenched like fists ready for a fight or floppy and relaxed?

6

### BREATHING

Is it from your chest and rapid, or from your stomach and slow with full 'out' breaths?

7

### TOES

Are they curled up tight or relaxed?



## Ways to relax

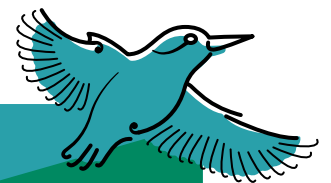
Some people relax by going for a walk or doing some gardening. Others relax by reading a book, listening to music, watching a movie or talking to friends.

How do you relax? .....

.....

.....

.....



Learn more at:  
[calm.auckland.ac.nz](http://calm.auckland.ac.nz)



# Deep breathing

- ▶ Deep breathing, or breathing into your stomach, can make you feel better and help you to relax.
- ▶ This is also called diaphragmatic breathing.



## Deep breathing technique - this can be done sitting or lying down

1

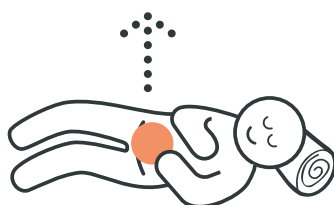


Lie on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head on a pillow.

You can also put a pillow under your knees to support your legs.

Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

2



Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand.

The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

3



Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you breathe out through your lips like you are going to whistle.

The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

You may notice an increased effort is needed to use the diaphragm correctly. At first, you might get tired doing this exercise but keep at it because, with continued practice, diaphragmatic breathing will become easy and automatic.

Practise for 5-10 minutes, about 3-4 times per day. Gradually increase the amount of time you spend doing this exercise, and perhaps even increase the effort by placing a book on your stomach/puku.

# Feeling good

Five ways to wellbeing.

- ▶ Doing these 5 things can make you feel better about yourself, both physically and mentally.

## Connect

### *Me whakawhanaunga*

Spend time with people in your life who make you feel good. Are they friends, family, colleagues or neighbours? These connections can support you and enrich your life.

## Give

### *Tukua*

Do something for a friend or a stranger. It feels good to give and makes you feel part of your community.

## Take notice

### *Me aro tonu*

Be aware of the world around you and see the beauty in everyday and unusual things - reflecting on them helps you appreciate what matters to you.

## Learn

### *Me ako tonu*

Try something new or rediscover an old interest. Take on a new responsibility or challenge - learning makes you more confident and can be fun.

## Be active

### *Me kori tonu*

Physical activity helps in so many ways, so find something that you enjoy that suits your ability.

Use the weekly activity diary to plan how you will build some of these into your day.



Learn more at: [hn.org.nz](https://hn.org.nz)

- Search for **wellbeing** and **mental health**.

# Symptom diary

You can help your doctor diagnose and treat your condition by preparing some answers to possible questions about your symptoms. Since some symptoms are difficult to describe, it is helpful to write down information about your symptoms as you experience them, such as when they occur and what you did to manage them.

Date and time	What symptom(s) did you experience (eg, shortness of breath, knee pain)?	How long did the symptoms last?	How intense were the symptoms (on a scale of 1-10)?	What was the trigger for the symptom/s (eg, exercise, stress)?	What did you do to reduce the symptoms?

# My weekly activity diary

To keep track of what I am doing



Use this diary to plan your week and record your activity towards your goals.

Activity	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<b>Mental wellbeing/ Te taha hinengaro</b> Relaxation Fun Sleep							
<b>Spiritual wellbeing/ Te taha wairua</b> Music/singing Mindfulness Church/prayer							
<b>Social wellbeing/ Te taha whānau</b> Whānau Friends Work/study/volunteer							
<b>Physical wellbeing/ Te taha tinana</b> Healthy eating Being active Managing symptoms							

# My food diary

## To keep track of my eating



If you are thinking of making changes so you can eat more healthily, use this diary to record everything you eat and drink. This can help you work out how much you are eating and where you could make changes.

Meal	Type of food and drinks	Amount	How did I prepare/cook it?
Breakfast			
Morning snack			
Lunch			
Afternoon snack			
Dinner			
Evening snack			

Meal	Type of food and drinks	Amount	How did I prepare/cook it?
Breakfast			
Morning snack			
Lunch			
Afternoon snack			
Dinner			
Evening snack			

## My fatigue action plan



Now it's time to start making a plan to improve your fatigue.

Start with a goal, it can be anything that you would like to achieve that is important to you. When you decide on what you will do to work towards your goal, try to make it:

- **Specific** - not vague.
- **Measurable** - so you know you are doing it.
- **Achievable** - if it's too hard you won't manage it.
- **Realistic** - if it's not possible you might not even get started!
- **Trackable** - something you can record over time and see how you're doing.

Here's an example:

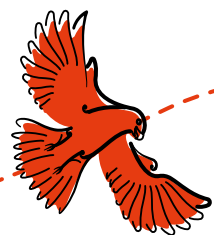
**Goal:** Hemi wants to keep his vege garden going to help feed his whānau.

**Actions:** His fatigue gets in the way so he needs to manage it better.

**Chosen action:** Hemi makes an activities list each morning and fits 2 sessions of 15 minutes of gardening between rests and other things he can do while sitting down.

**Confidence:** He is fairly sure he can do this so rates his confidence as 8 out of 10.

*If a big change feels too much, break it down into a set of steps. Small steps are a great way to start.*



# My action plan: What is my goal and action plan?



## My fatigue action plan goal:

**Why** do I want to do this? \_\_\_\_\_

**How** will this help? \_\_\_\_\_

**What** could I do to achieve this: \_\_\_\_\_

## My fatigue action plan:

**How much** or how often will I do this? \_\_\_\_\_

**When** will I do this? \_\_\_\_\_

**Who** can help me: \_\_\_\_\_

**How confident am I that I can do this:** ☹️ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 😊

Things I am not ready to do yet: \_\_\_\_\_

What might stop me achieving these goals or making these changes? \_\_\_\_\_

You are more likely to be successful if your confidence level is 7 or more. If you are less confident, you might like to make your action plan easier.



For more copies, visit  
[hn.org.nz/kete](http://hn.org.nz/kete)