

Fact Sheet: Managing Fatigue

Fatigue is a constant lack of energy. It can be one of the biggest challenges for people living with health conditions.

It is not the same as just feeling tired or sleepy. With fatigue you feel drained all the time.

Fatigue can be physical, mental or both. It can make it hard for you to get out of bed in the morning or prevent you from completing a simple task.

Learning to deal with it can really help.

BOOM AND BUST

Before we look in more detail at ways to deal with fatigue, we are going to look at a common cause of it.

This is known as the **BOOM AND BUST** cycle.

1. On 'good' days, you feel well and have good energy levels. It can be tempting to try to do all the things that you were not able to do when you were too tired or feeling unwell, and catch up. You can feel that you must get on with things, no matter what. You **BOOM**.

You may not feel it at the time, but you can overdo things physically, mentally or emotionally. This leads to...

2. Worse mood, energy, and coping later on. Feelings of fatigue, possible low mood and anxiety. You may then need to...
3. Rest and do nothing to try to regain energy levels on these 'bad' days. But you may find...
4. Your body and brain are too tired. You **BUST**. This then leads to the cycle starting again.



Most of us tend to be over active on a good day and under active on a bad day.

Each time this **BOOM AND BUST** cycle happens, our brain, emotional and body abilities can get worse. We are able to do less and less on a good day. Our low mood and anxiety also gets worse.

What we are doing is letting the way we feel at any one time decide what we do. Then we pay the price in the long run.

Long periods of time in the **BOOM AND BUST** cycle can lead to lack of energy and motivation.

This is when you say to yourself "What's the point in trying to do anything? I am only going to feel awful anyway."

There are a number of ways to beat the **BOOM AND BUST** cycle.

One way to beat the **BOOM AND BUST** cycle of fatigue is using the 3Ps:

- Prioritising
- Planning
- Pacing

With the 3Ps you are taking control of what you do.

PRIORITISING

When we put things into some sort of order, we are prioritising them.

Look at your jobs/activities and see if they are:

- Things that you have to do
- Things that you enjoy doing
- Things that you can give to someone else to do
- Things that do not need to be done

When you have put your tasks into order, then start planning your diary...

PLANNING

Use a Pacing Diary and different colour pens to record:

- Things that you have to do - chores etc. in black/blue
- Things that you enjoy - in a bright colour
- Try and do something you enjoy every day

PACING

We can manage the **BOOM AND BUST** cycle of fatigue by pacing what we do each day.

Pacing yourself means working out what you can do on an average day without moving into the **BUST** phase of the cycle.



By taking control of what you do, you are in charge of the fatigue. The fatigue is not in charge of you.

This can be done by seeing how much you can do before you are fairly fatigued.

Then you stop and rest before you move into the **BUST** phase.

Even if you feel you have more energy on a good day it is important not to do more activity than you have planned.

You need to avoid moving into the **BUST** phase of the cycle.

Tasks can be split into easy chunks. Some people like to have 'timed chunks'. Others like 'task chunks'.