

Children's Therapy Service

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CHILDRENS LONG COVID SERVICE

Fatigue Management

Fatigue can affect someone both physically and mentally. It is the feeling of constant exhaustion. Fatigue is different from sleepiness or drowsiness as this refers to a persons need to sleep. It generally presents as a lack of energy and can also affect someone's motivation.

Those experiencing fatigue are often unaware of their lack of energy and may need support from others to recognise the signs and symptoms.

There are different metaphors you can use to describe energy levels. Here are two that you might find useful, they might also help you to plan your energy across the day.

Spoon Theory

- Each person has about the same amount of energy to use every day.
- Spoons are used to represent each unit of energy.
- Those who experience fatigue due to illness have fewer spoons to use each day compared with someone who does not experience fatigue.
- Different activities you need to complete each day use a different number of spoons. E.g. Reading a book uses fewer spoons than going to school.
- A person experiencing fatigue will need to decide which activities they are going to spend their spoons on each day to make sure they do not run out of spoons.
- Resting regularly throughout the day will top up the number of spoons you have and ensure you do not run out of energy.

Battery Theory

- You can think of energy as a rechargeable battery.
- A person who does not experience fatigue is able to charge their battery over night when they sleep.
- A person who experiences fatigue due to illness is not able to recharge their battery over night as effectively or is not able to fully recharge their battery.
- Different activities you need to complete each day uses a different amount of battery power. E.g. Reading a book uses less than going to school.
- A person experiencing fatigue will need to decide which activities they are going to use their battery power on each day to make sure they do not run out of charge.

- Topping up your battery throughout the day through regular rests will ensure you do not run out of energy.

General principles

1. Take frequent rests

- Remember that resting means doing nothing at all. Relaxation techniques can make it easier for you to rest if you find it difficult to do nothing at all.
- Do not be tempted to do too much on a day when you are feeling well as this could make you feel worse in a day or so.
- If you have a big event coming up (like an exam, sports day etc.) prepare for it in the days before by getting as much rest as possible.

2. Prioritise activities – Energy conservation

- Look at the activities you need to do in a day and decide which are essential and which can wait for another time. Make sure you include some activities you enjoy in your essentials.
- Ask other people to help you with the activities you find difficult or use a lot of energy.
- Save your energy as much as possible. For example, only go up and down the stairs when it is essential, like at the start of the day or to use the toilet.

3. Plan ahead – pacing

- Make a daily or weekly timetable of the activities you need to do. Make sure you include hobbies, clubs and school work. Try and put the activities in order of what is most important for you to do before you run out of energy.
- Break large activities into smaller parts that can be spread across the day.
- Set yourself achievable goals for each day.
- It is important to recognise when you are running out of energy and to say no to an activity.

4. Keep fit and healthy

- Eat a well-balanced diet. Being overweight can have a negative effect on energy levels.
- Keep moving as much as you can. Try and avoid sitting or lying in the same position for a long time. If possible, stand up and move around to reduce stiffness in joints.
- Exercise regularly if you can but remember to balance this with rests.

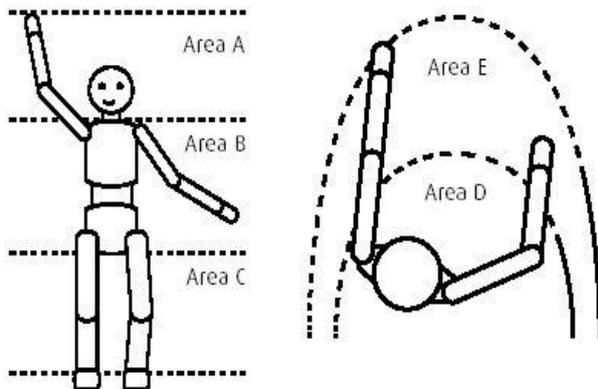
Activities

1. Relaxation

- Relaxation should take place in a quiet place that is free from distractions
- Find a position you find comfortable, this could be sitting or lying down.
- Make sure the room is warm enough as body temperature can drop during relaxation. Cover yourself with a blanket if you need to.
- You might find it easier if you close your eyes. This can help to reduce distractions.
- Now practice the relaxation method you have chosen. For example, soothing music, mediation, mindfulness.
- Try and do about 20 minutes every day to maximise the benefits.

2. Organise your work area and tools

- Organising your work area and tools can help you to use your energy more effectively.



Vertically

Area A: From shoulder to extended arm height

Objects that are lightweight and used less often

Area B: Between hip and shoulder

Tools and objects in continual use

Area C: From the hip to the floor

Heavy and less used items

Horizontally:

Area D: From your body to your finger tips with elbows bent

Items in current use

Area E: From the end of area D to your finger tips with your arm extended

Items used less often

Other Suggestions

1. Complete an Energy Measure activity to help you with planning ahead and prioritising activities (see information attached).

SIGNED: Vanessa Taylor - Childrens Occupational Therapist

TO BE CARRIED OUT UNDER THE DIRECTION OF AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

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