

Fatigue Fighters

The Foundation thanks Frederick Vivino, MD, FACR, University of Pennsylvania, Penn Rheumatology Associates & Sjögren's Syndrome Center, Philadelphia, for authoring this Patient Education Sheet.

Fatigue is one of the most prevalent and disabling symptoms of Sjögren's syndrome. Here are some tips that can help you cope with the problem:

- ▶ Work with your doctor to find a specific cause and treatment for your fatigue. The possibilities may include systemic inflammation, poor sleep, fibromyalgia, depression, hypothyroidism, muscle inflammation, or side-effects of medications.
- ▶ Know your limits and pace yourself. Plan to do no more than one activity on your bad days. Try to do more on your good days, but don't overdo it!
- ▶ Listen to your body and plan to take a 20-minute time-out every few hours to help you get through your day. Educate your friends and family about what you are going through and how the fatigue in Sjögren's syndrome can come and go.
- ▶ Develop a support system to help you with tasks. Ask friends and family members to be prepared to do one or two chores for you on your fatigue days. Give them specific instructions in advance and be reasonable with your expectations.
- ▶ Get at least eight hours of sleep every night. If you wake up at night, plan extra time for sleep.
- ▶ Get your body moving every day! This may help not only your fatigue but also your chronic pain, poor sleep and depression. Start with five minutes of aerobic exercise daily (e.g. walking, biking, running, elliptical, treadmill) and increase the duration by an additional two-to-three minutes each month up to a maximum of 25 minutes daily. If you have a heart or lung condition, consult your doctor first.
- ▶ If you are still employed, ask your employer for accommodations because you have a medical condition. Try to work from home if possible, to gain more flexibility with your work routine. Check the following resources (search "chronic fatigue") to get more information on work accommodations and/or career options:
 - Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center at www.dbtac.vcu.edu.
 - Job Accommodation Network at www.jan.wvu.edu.
- ▶ Identify the major stressors in your life and work with a mental health professional or your support system to minimize their impact.

For more information on Sjögren's, visit the Foundation website at www.sjogrens.org, call 301-530-4420, email info@sjogrens.org, or write to the Sjögren's Foundation, 10701 Parkridge Blvd, Ste 170, Reston, VA 20191

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