



Managing Fatigue in Autoimmune Disease

A Guide for Patients



Why does fatigue happen?

Fatigue in autoimmune and rheumatic conditions is common. It can come from inflammation, pain, poor sleep, medications, stress, or the body working harder to fight disease. *While there's no "quick fix," small steps add up and make a big difference over time.*

What Can You do?

1. Improve Sleep Quality

- Keep a regular sleep and wake time
- Create a calming bedtime routine (no screens, dim lights, quiet activity)
- Limit caffeine and alcohol in the afternoon/evening
- If sleep apnea or restless legs are suspected, ask your doctor

2. Move Your Body (Gently)

- Light activity helps boost energy (i.e., walking, stretching, yoga)
- Start small: even 5–10 minutes a day
- Avoid overdoing it. Balance activity with rest

3. Eat Well and Fuel the Body

- Eat balanced meals with lean protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains
- Stay hydrated throughout the day
- Limit highly processed and sugary foods that can cause energy crashes

4. Manage Stress

- Try relaxation techniques: deep breathing, mindfulness, meditation, prayer
- Journal or talk with supportive friends/family
- Consider counseling if stress feels overwhelming; seek help

5 Remember PACING

- Prioritize important tasks, let go of what's less urgent
- Break big chores into smaller steps
- Alternate activity with rest periods
- Use tools like planners, reminders, or timers

6. Check Meds and Other Factors

- Some medicines can worsen fatigue; ask if adjustments are possible
- Low vitamin D, thyroid changes, or anemia can add to fatigue. Bloodwork may help
- Report new or worsening fatigue to your doctor/care team

