

Managing Fatigue After COVID-19

What is post viral fatigue?

Post viral fatigue is defined as an extended period of feeling unwell, fatigued and lacking energy after a viral infection. Fatigue is a common symptom of COVID 19, so it is likely that some people will continue to experience fatigue for some time after the infection has cleared.

It is important to monitor and manage your fatigue symptoms because in some cases it can develop into a long term or chronic illness which would require specialist intervention.

General Recommendations:

- **Rest** – You need to continue to take short rests throughout the day even when you are improving. STOP. DO NOTHING. CALM YOUR MIND.
- **Daily Routine**– try and resume a daily routine for sleeping, eating and daily activities. Do not rush this. It helps the body to stabilise itself again.
- **Try Activity** – if you feel that your fatigue is improving, try a small amount of light activity (probably less than you think) and then rest afterwards. Do your best to stop yourself “pushing through” the fatigue – try to stop before you get tired. Be prepared to leave tasks half-done. Listen to how your body responds to activity, even a few days afterwards.
- **‘Thinking’ Activities** – remember that “thinking activities” such as checking emails, using your phone, making decisions and reading all require energy. Take rests away from distractions.
- **Slowly Increase Activity** – often people increase their activity too quickly and can experience set backs. Increase your level of activity slowly (every couple of weeks). It could be useful to keep a diary of your activities.

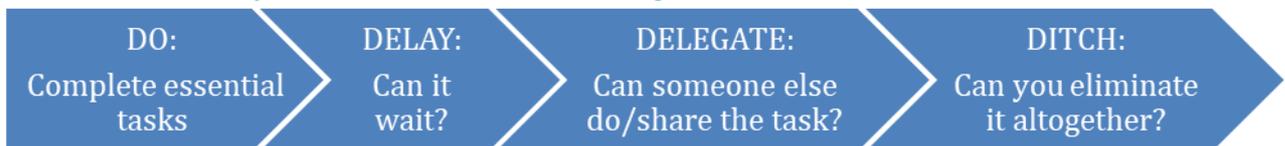
- **Work** – you may have to take longer off work than initially anticipated and may have to have a gradual return to work. Speak to your manager and get advice from occupational health. You may also need a fit note from your GP. See *return to work advice for more information*.

Advice and Strategies

Environment

You may need to consider making some short-term modifications to your home or routine to help manage the impact of your fatigue. If you feel like you need equipment and/or adaptations to your home, your GP can refer you to an Occupational Therapist.

Prioritise your activities using the 4 Ds’:



Also ensure that you include enjoyable activities into your daily routine!

Pacing

When pacing, it is important to stop an activity before you feel fatigued.

Remember: ‘TIME not task’

15 minutes housework rather than ‘clean the house’

10 minutes tidying desk rather than ‘tidy the office’

10 minutes preparing vegetables rather than ‘prepare dinner’

Moving Forward

It can take several months and sometimes a year or more for people to feel fully recovered from post-viral fatigue. If it is gradually improving, keep going. Stress and worry use energy, so give yourself time and be kind to yourself.

What if I am not improving?

Seek specialist advice— if after 3-4 months you aren’t seeing any improvement in fatigue after having a virus then you should ask your GP for advice so that they can check there aren’t any other causes for the symptoms. They can also refer you onto a specialist team.