When asked about fatigue, most people might think of not getting enough sleep. Although adequate sleep is absolutely instrumental in ensuring optimal energy levels, there are other factors that might contribute to fatigue as well.

**Hydration, Hydration, Hydration**

Fatigue can be a symptom of dehydration. Since our bodies are made up of mostly water, and we have no way to “store” water, remind yourself that you’ll need plenty of fluids to feel your best. If exercising outdoors, take into consideration the elements: heat, humidity and length of time exposed to the sun and cold, all of which increase your need for fluids. Fluid needs will vary greatly from one person to the next, but for most 6-8 eight ounces glasses is a good start. Although fluid tolerance depends on many things, well-hydrated individuals do find that they have to pee at least 2-3 times per day and have almost clear to pale yellow colored urine. If you find that you need to go less often, perhaps you are somewhat dehydrated.

**Vitamin/Mineral Deficiency or Other Medical Condition**

Chronic fatigue that does not seem to go away regardless of how much you sleep, should be evaluated by your health care provider. Schedule an appointment with a clinician at Student Health to rule out the possibility of a vitamin/mineral deficiency, such as iron, or other health issue. More often than not there is an easy fix.

**You Aren’t Eating Enough**

- If you are working out, make sure that you are giving your body enough fuel to do so. Sometimes we forget that when we ask the body to do more, we need to give it “slightly” more energy.
- If you’re trying to lose weight, make sure you haven’t decreased your intake too much, resulting in an overly slowed metabolism, and make you feel sluggish. If you are making changes to your diet check in with a Student Health Dietitian for the best recommendations. Although any decrease in eating can lower your metabolism, cutting back too much, can stall the metabolism.

**Too Many Sugary Carbohydrates**

Simple sugars are broken down and stored very quickly. Consumption of a lot sweets (especially on an empty stomach or in place of meals) i.e. chocolate, Swedish fish, gummy bears, bin candy, and cookies can cause a very rapid rise in blood sugar. Consumption of a lot of refined flours; pizza, bread, muffins, donuts etc. may have the same effect. The immediate response is a feeling of energy. However, within an hour, this feeling is often replaced with fatigue, as the blood sugar has been effectively stored by that time. You may wish to consider setting up an appointment with one of the dietitians at Student Health to help you develop strategies for eating for sustained energy.

**Not Enough Sleep**

- As much as you may not be able to get 8 hours per night, do the best you can to get at least 7 hours whenever possible.
What Can Cause Fatigue? (Continued)

Not Enough Sleep (continued)

• Insure the quality of your sleep. Try not to eat or drink alcohol within 2 hours before going to bed. Don’t workout before going to bed since exercise can make you feel energetic, which is not what you want if you’re trying to sleep. It’s best to limit caffeine to before lunch.

• Don’t use food to give you energy when lack of sleep is the problem. Often, people eat to help them stay awake, which doesn’t work. Try to listen to what your body is asking for and get some rest.

Depression

If it’s more than feeling tired - accompanied by sadness, loss of appetite or lack of motivation, you may be suffering from some depressive symptoms. Contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) for a meeting to help assess what might be going on.

Stress

Sometimes stress can be a good thing. It can help motivate us to get a job done. However, stress shouldn’t be ongoing or overwhelming. At those times, stress can be exhausting. When the prospect of getting anything done seems so overwhelming that you can’t get anything done, then things have gotten out of control. Is it because you are the type to say “yes” to everything? You need to assess your priorities and learn to say “no.” This will help decrease your stress considerably. Saying “no” does not mean that you don’t care or that you are letting someone down. It simply means that you don’t have the time right now. It’s important to respect your own limits and take care of yourself. This can be energizing in and of itself.

For help with stress management contact CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) or DuWell (Duke Wellness Center)

Inadequate Time For Recovering From Injury

One mistake that many people can make, is trying to get into a normal routine too quickly after recovering from surgery, illness or injury. The body takes time to heal, so don’t be too quick to rush back. This can increase the feelings of fatigue and make the recovery process longer.