



## Post Covid fatigue group programme

**Welcome to the post Covid fatigue group sessions.**

**This programme will consist of eight sessions over the upcoming weeks, covering the following topics:**

- Thinking about activity
- Breathing
- Energy management
- Diet & half-way reflection
- Emotions and stress management
- Adjustment
- Cognition
- Fatigue in the workplace

The order of each session may change depending on the clinicians availability. Each session will run for 45–60 minutes and will include: a review of the group rules, a power point presentation (a copy of each week's topic will be emailed across beforehand) and a 10–15 minutes Question and Answer session at the end. A clinician will be present on the call to answer any questions that you may have.

### Group rules

- Please show respect to others in the group and listen to them when they are speaking
- Please maintain confidentiality – stories/experiences discussed in the group must not be discussed outside of the session
- Please attend as many sessions as possible and inform a therapist if you are unable to attend a session
- Following the presentation, there will be an opportunity to ask questions and the session will open up into a discussion. It is therefore recommended that you have a pen/paper to make notes throughout
- If you wish to speak during the discussion, please raise your hand using the icon on your screen. Please then wait until it is your turn to speak to avoid any interruptions
- We may ask you to join in with activities during these sessions. Please only do this if you feel able to

Please try and attend as many sessions as possible and if you are unable to attend for whatever reason, please email [Bhamsolihull.fatigue@nhs.net](mailto:Bhamsolihull.fatigue@nhs.net).

### So, why are you here?

Following Covid you have been left with fatigue, which affects how you are able to perform day to day tasks. This may include your ability to go to work, drive, go shopping, wash and dress yourself, and carry out a range of activities that are meaningful to you. The purpose of the next six weeks is to provide you with information that will help you to understand why you have symptoms of fatigue. The sessions will also present you with some strategies that will help you to manage your fatigue throughout the day.

## Information for Patients

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We would like you to try some of the below strategies before the first session.

### Planning, pacing and prioritising

**Pacing** – look at your diary and identify how activities could be broken up rather than doing them all in one go. Find your baseline level and ensure that you have a middle ground where you aren't doing too much or too little. Ensure that you incorporate rest periods in between activities to help 'recharge.'

**Planning** – how can you spread activities out throughout the week? Can higher energy tasks be carried out at a different time? Think through activities before you do them, could the activity be done differently so it is easier?

**Prioritising** – what is necessary and what could wait? What do I **want** to do today/what do I **need** to do today? Could the task be carried out by somebody else/could they help? This will help to prevent a Boom and Bust scenario.

### Boom and bust

- Think about your good days – how much activity do you do when you 'feel good'?
- Do you increase your activity levels on days when you feel good as you feel like you have more energy?
- Do you remain at low activity levels and get stuck at this point, often causing worry about doing more and symptoms potentially worsening?
- Activity meaning – it is not just physical. You should consider cognitive (mental fatigue) and emotional fatigue as well

### Activity diaries

- A good way to identify types of activity that we carry out each day and how these can impact fatigue levels
- Allow us to begin to think about how we can better plan our activities, pace them and which tasks to prioritise
- Help us to identify a 'just right' balance between activities that we may **need** to do and those that we **want** to do
- Enable us to establish a 'baseline' level of functioning – what is a stable and sustainable level?
- Help to gain appreciation for how much we are actually doing, when we may feel like we aren't doing very much

Below is an example of an activity diary. Accompanying this leaflet is an activity diary and a score sheet for you to try.

| Day              | 6am–9am  |       | 9am–12pm |       | 12pm–3pm |       | 3pm–6pm  |       | 6pm–bedtime |       |
|------------------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-------------|-------|
|                  | Activity | Score | Activity | Score | Activity | Score | Activity | Score | Activity    | Score |
| <b>Monday</b>    |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |
| <b>Tuesday</b>   |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |
| <b>Wednesday</b> |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |
| <b>Thursday</b>  |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |
| <b>Friday</b>    |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |
| <b>Saturday</b>  |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |
| <b>Sunday</b>    |          |       |          |       |          |       |          |       |             |       |

### Sleep hygiene and management

- Some people can experience different problems with sleep: too little sleep, too much sleep, disturbed sleep, struggling to get off to sleep, waking up early or just not feeling refreshed when they wake up
- Poor sleep or erratic sleep routines can add a significant layer of fatigue
- Managing your sleep patterns can therefore be important in helping you to manage your fatigue and mental health
- Having a regular sleep routine, whereby you set a regular sleep and waking time, can optimise energy during the day

### In summary

Please try two or three of the techniques from the accompanying 'sleep hygiene' leaflet to help improve your sleep.

| Positive influences on sleep:  | Negative influences on sleep:   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Going to bed and getting up at the same time</li><li>• Daily exercise</li><li>• Getting fresh air and natural light first thing in the morning</li><li>• Keeping the bedroom cool, dark &amp; quiet</li><li>• Doing a relaxation exercise before going to bed</li><li>• Keeping your hands and feet warm</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Using electronic devices before bed</li><li>• Napping during the day or evening</li><li>• Drinking alcohol before bed or caffeine after 3pm</li><li>• Drinking fizzy, sugary drinks before bed</li><li>• Smoking before bed</li><li>• Going to bed hungry or eating too much before bed</li><li>• Getting frustrated or annoyed with yourself for not being able to sleep</li></ul> |

### Diet

#### Fatigue can result in:

- Weight changes due to reduced activity – gaining fat without muscle which can then affect function
- Difficulties preparing and shopping for food due to reduced energy levels
- Cravings for sugary foods and caffeinated drinks to provide energy.

#### Here are some ideas and advice for eating whilst fatigued:

- Little and often: smaller portions, eaten more frequently, can be easier to manage
- Opt for foods that require minimal preparation
- Eat when you can, even if this differs from your normal eating pattern
- Soft, moist foods require less chewing which enables more to be eaten
- Aim for a nutritious diet which includes plenty of fruit, vegetables, protein and carbohydrates (wholegrain where possible). Healthy fats can also be an important step towards improving your energy levels and minimising muscle loss
- Drink 6–8 cups of sugar and caffeine free drinks a day

## In conclusion:

We look forward to seeing you over the coming weeks. The sessions planned will provide you with information to help you to understand why you are suffering from fatigue following Covid. They will also provide you with some strategies to manage your symptoms as you continue on your journey of recovery.

This leaflet has been assembled from information provided by: Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust, Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust & University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust.

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, providing a template for handwriting practice or general writing. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the page.

University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email [interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk)