

Fatigue is a theoretical construct. Fatigue is typified by symptoms of inattention, degraded judgment, poor motor skills, exhaustion, confusion and other effects.

THERE ARE FOUR MAIN CAUSES OF FATIGUE

1. Inadequate rest.
2. Desynchronized physiological circadian rhythms
3. Weariness following physical activity
4. Impaired judgment following prolonged mental activity.

FATIGUE INDUCED ERRORS ARE OF TWO TYPES

Errors of Commission – doing something incorrectly

Errors of Omission – not doing something that should be done.

Errors of Omission are the most common errors made by fatigued individuals.

Selected References:

Gaba DM, Howard SK. Fatigue among clinicians and the safety of patients. NEJM 2002;347:1249-1254.

Haines RF. Night Flying. McGraw-Hill 1992.

Malmstrom FV. You might be fatigued if.... Flying Safety. 1997.

Smakoff JS, Jacques CHM. A review of studies concerning effects of sleep deprivation and fatigue on residents' performance. Acad Med. 1991; 66:687-693.

Veasey s, Rosen R, Barzansky B, Rosen I, Owens J. Sleep loss and fatigue in residency training: A reappraisal. JAMA 2002; 288:1116-1124.

For a bibliography of articles on the effect of sleep loss and performance as prepared by the ACGME contact the GME Office. 315-464-5136-

State University of New York



Upstate
Medical
University

Suny Upstate Medical University
Office of Graduate Medical Education
750 East Adams Street UH 1814
Syracuse, NY 13210

ARE YOU FATIGUED?



A Guide for Residents and Attending

FATIGUE:

It tends to sneak up on you.

Fatigued individuals tend to be in denial about their own functioning and will not always recognize their own fatigue.

Recognizing and addressing fatigue must be done in a supportive and non-punitive environment. Given this, both residents and faculty have specific responsibilities

If you believe that you are fatigued or if you observe another individual who is clearly fatigued, the following actions should be taken:

RESIDENTS

1. Immediately contact the attending on call.
2. Request that you or the other individual be relieved from duty immediately after assuring a smooth transition of patient care.

FACULTY

1. Immediately relieve the resident from patient care duties after assuring a smooth transition of patient care.

Fatigue – You can't wish it away.

YOU MIGHT BE FATIGUED IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

Physical Symptoms:

1. Frequent, unexplainable headaches
2. Muscular aches and pains
3. Breathing difficulties
4. Blurred/double vision
5. Burning urination
6. Loss of appetite

Mental Symptoms:

1. Attentional narrowing
2. Easily distracted
3. Reduced performance standards
4. Feeling of depression
5. Impaired judgment
6. Poor visual perception

7. Expanded tolerance limits (willing to settle for less)

YOU MIGHT SEE THE FOLLOWING IN SOMEONE WHO IS FATIGUED

Physical Symptoms:

1. Degraded motor skills
2. Tenseness and tremors
3. Intolerant / irritable
4. Increased reaction time

Mental Symptoms:

1. Absentmindedness
2. Reduced short-term memory
3. Lack of interest and drive
4. Confused and fearful
5. Decreased startle response
6. Worried and anxious
7. Social withdrawal
8. Easily distracted