FlintRehab
Tools to spark recovery

FREE EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR

Breaking Through Post-Stroke Fatigue

Practical strategies for physical, mental, and sensory fatigue that you can use to overcome fatigue after stroke

Rachel Higdon, PT, DPT

Physical Therapist, Flint Rehab



TODAY

What we'll cover

01 Understanding post-stroke fatigue

02 Cognitive and sensory fatigue

03 Recognizing your personal patterns

04 Five ways to move forward

05 When to seek medical help

06 Final takeaways, then your questions

Questions are welcome in the chat throughout — we'll answer them at the end.

What is post-stroke fatigue?

A persistent or disproportionate lack of physical or mental energy that interferes with everyday life.
It may include:

- Physical exhaustion
- Mental exhaustion
- Sudden energy loss
- Longer recovery after activity
- Feeling unrefreshed after sleep
- Energy that changes from day to day

> **Post-stroke fatigue is real. It doesn't mean someone is lazy, unmotivated, or no longer trying to recover.**

Fatigue isn't always the same experience

These can overlap — but they aren't the same thing.

Fatigue	**"I don't have the energy to continue."**
Sleepiness	"I feel like I could fall asleep."
Weakness	"My muscles can't produce enough force."
Low motivation	"I have difficulty getting started."
Cognitive overload	"My brain can't process anything else."

ASK YOURSELF

What does my fatigue feel like?

Do I feel sleepy, depleted, weak, or overwhelmed?

Is it physical, mental, or both?

Does rest restore my energy?

What activities tend to trigger it?

How long does it take me to recover?



Why can fatigue happen after stroke?

There's usually no single cause. Fatigue may be affected by:

- Changes in the brain
- Increased effort during movement
- Cognitive demands
- Poor sleep or sleep apnea
- Pain or muscle tightness
- Depression, anxiety, or stress
- Medication side effects
- Physical deconditioning
- Other medical conditions

> **Persistent fatigue shouldn't automatically be blamed on the stroke. It's important to consider the full picture.**



Your brain uses energy too

The brain uses energy to:

- Concentrate
- Remember
- Communicate
- Make decisions
- Manage emotions
- Coordinate movement
- Filter sights and sounds

> **Mental activity is still activity. You don't have to be moving to become fatigued.**

Cognitive overload

When the brain is asked to process more than it can comfortably manage at one time.

COMMON TRIGGERS

- Multitasking
- Complicated conversations
- Too many instructions
- Frequent interruptions
- Decision-making
- Learning something new
- Extended screen time

WAYS TO REDUCE IT

- Focus on one activity at a time
- Break instructions into single steps
- Write down important information
- Allow extra time to respond
- Reduce unnecessary decisions
- Pause when concentration declines
- Do hard tasks at higher-energy times

KEY MESSAGE

Simplifying a task is not giving up. It's removing unnecessary demands so your energy can be used more effectively.

Sensory fatigue

After stroke, filtering and organizing sensory information can take more effort. Common triggers:

- Loud or overlapping conversations
- Background television or music
- Bright or flashing lights
- Crowded environments
- Visual clutter
- Strong smells
- People moving nearby



Managing your environment

Reduce unnecessary stimulation:

- Turn off background TV
- Ask one person to speak at a time
- Reduce visual clutter
- Use softer lighting
- Visit places during quieter hours
- Take breaks in a quiet space
- Schedule recovery time

> **Managing fatigue isn't always about doing fewer meaningful activities. It can mean reducing the noise, distractions, and decisions surrounding them.**

Understand your energy budget

Think of energy like a battery.

Some days begin with more energy than others.

Physical and mental activities both drain the battery.

Different activities use energy at different rates.

Waiting until it's empty may prolong recovery.

A SIMPLE FATIGUE SCALE

0–2	Plenty of energy
3–5	Fatigue is noticeable
6–7	Activity is becoming difficult
8–10	Completely depleted

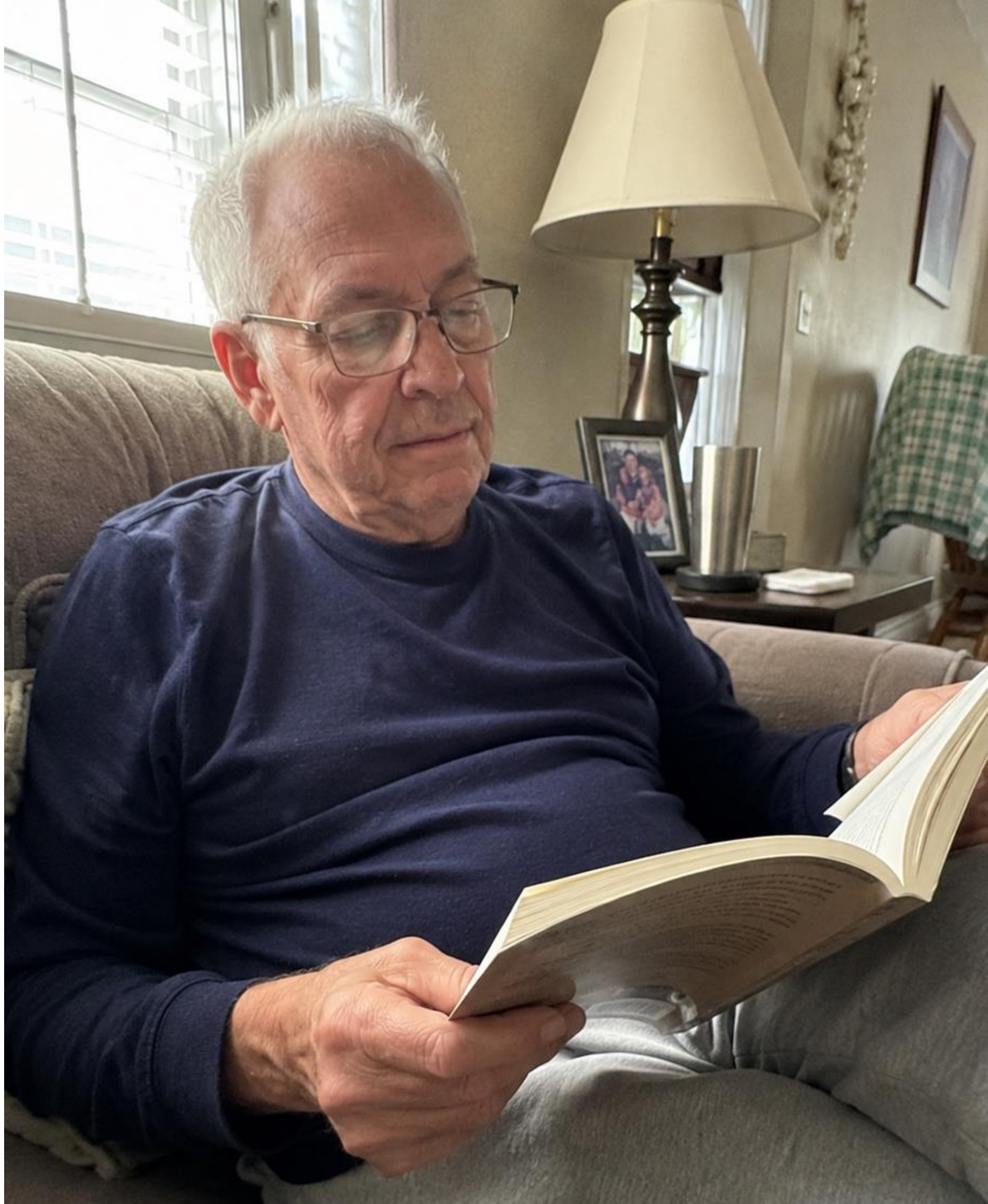
Adjust or rest before you reach an 8 or 9.

Track your patterns

Keep a simple diary for several days:

- Time of day
- Activity
- Energy before and after
- Physical, mental, or sensory demands
- Sleep
- Meals and hydration
- Pain, stress, and mood
- Recovery time

> **Watch for delayed fatigue — a crash hours later or the next day.**



WHAT CAN HELP

Five ways to move forward

1. Address treatable contributors
2. Gradually build capacity
3. Consider CBT-informed support
4. Manage energy with the four Ps
5. Support sleep and daily energy

WAY ONE

Address treatable contributors

Talk with a healthcare provider about:

- Sleep and sleep apnea
- Depression or anxiety
- Pain
- Nutrition and hydration
- Anemia or thyroid problems
- Infection
- Medication side effects

> **Never stop or change a medication on your own. The most helpful change may be addressing what's worsening fatigue — not adding another medication.**





WAY TWO

Gradually build physical capacity

- Start at a manageable level
- Short, consistent activity
- Increase slowly
- Planned recovery breaks
- Monitor delayed fatigue
- Professional guidance

> **Gradually increasing activity doesn't mean repeatedly exhausting yourself.**

WAY THREE

Consider CBT-informed support

Cognitive behavioral therapy doesn't mean fatigue is "all in your head." It may help with patterns that make fatigue harder to manage.

BOOM AND BUST

"I need to get everything done before this energy disappears."

A MORE HELPFUL RESPONSE

"I feel good today, so I'll use that energy for what matters most — and save some for tomorrow."

All-or-nothing patterns

Guilt about resting

Sleep habits

Stress and frustration

Realistic goals

Responding to setbacks

WAY FOUR

Manage energy with the four Ps

Prioritize

- Choose what matters most
- Decide what truly needs to happen today
- Let less important tasks wait
- Ask for help when appropriate

Plan

- Do demanding tasks at higher-energy times
- Avoid stacking difficult activities
- Gather what you need first
- Schedule recovery time

Pace

- Break tasks into smaller steps
- Alternate physical and mental tasks
- Take breaks before exhaustion
- Don't do everything on a good day

Position

- Sit to shower, dress, cook, or fold laundry
- Keep frequent items within reach
- Organize to reduce extra movement
- Use recommended assistive devices

WAY FIVE

Support your sleep and daily energy

- Consistent sleep and wake times
- A quieter evening routine
- Regular meals
- Adequate hydration
- Gentle, consistent movement
- Caffeine awareness
- Appropriate nap timing

MENTION TO YOUR PROVIDER

Loud snoring, gasping during sleep, morning headaches, or regularly waking up unrefreshed.



KEY MESSAGE

Dealing with fatigue is most helpful when it happens before you're completely exhausted.

Five questions to ask yourself

There's no single cure — the most helpful plan usually combines several approaches.

1. **Is something treatable worsening my fatigue?**
2. **Could a medication be contributing?**
3. **Am I gradually building capacity — or repeatedly overdoing it?**
4. **Would CBT or other support help with sleep, stress, or activity patterns?**
5. **How can I adjust my schedule and environment?**

Managing fatigue doesn't mean giving up what matters. It means using your energy more intentionally.

THIS WEEK, TRY

1

Tracking your energy

2

Changing one part of your environment

3

One planned break before you're depleted

When to seek medical help

Contact a healthcare provider when fatigue:

- Is new or worsening
- Significantly limits daily activities
- Doesn't improve with rest
- Began after a medication change
- Occurs with mood or sleep changes
- Comes with other unexplained symptoms

CALL 911

For new stroke symptoms: sudden facial drooping, weakness, speech or vision changes, or severe balance problems.

Where to learn more

Free stroke recovery education, exercise guides, and survivor stories.

RECOVERY BLOG

flintrehab.com/learn

QUESTIONS ABOUT RECOVERY

(800) 593-5468 · enrollment@flintrehab.com

This webinar is educational and isn't a substitute for individual medical advice. Talk with your care team about your own recovery plan.



YOUR QUESTIONS

Live Q&A

Fatigue looks different for everyone — tell us what yours feels like and when it shows up.



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