

Fatigue



Fatigue: how many of you can get through the next few paragraphs without nodding off? Probably not this guy. When I start sharing all the wonderful symptoms that MS throws my way, so many people want to skip over fatigue and go right to the numbness. Most folks have a pretty good idea of what the word “fatigue” means and how it feels in general. But for me, using that word to describe the kind of exhaustion I experience doesn’t seem specific or accurate enough. When that tired sets in, I can’t just wait it out. It’s not like being worn out from a workout, where you can recover with a few hours of rest.

While I’ve learned that certain things can make the tired come on strong, it can be hard to predict when it’s going to slap me in the face next. A trip to the grocery store, or just a day out with the fam can be pretty good precursors to having a day of the sleeps. Sometimes for no good reason, I will nod off at the dinner table. Once those eyelids get heavy, it’s lights out. There are even days when I think my fatigue might border on narcolepsy.

The tiredness never comes on during bedtime; oh no, that would be way too easy. It always comes on when I’m driving or trying to enjoy my son’s soccer game. I often think I can power through it. But if I don’t make it to the couch, you will see me slumped forward and most likely drooling in my lap. Now **that’s** tired. This can happen just about any time, anywhere. I have even fallen asleep mid- conversation at a friend’s house.



(Photo credit: Meghann Prouse, Indie Photographer)

Most people understand that physical activity will cause fatigue. If we go for a walk, I will be wiped out for a day, maybe two. Even hopping in the shower will wipe me out. But the harder part to explain is how emotional stress can knock me down just as much. Being nervous, upset, or really stoked about something can really take it out of me. So between the physical act of doing something, and the emotional stress of just about anything, I am pretty much always tired. That isn't even counting the days where just sitting, doing absolutely nothing, kicks my ass.

Even though sleeping doesn't necessarily make the tiredness go away, it's something I do a lot of. That is one benefit to being on disability; there aren't many, but I will take this one. The doc also advised me to get brain rest (much like meditation). Basically, I need to find a quiet place away from the computer and phone, and just be. I think that's good for anyone though, MS or not.

I don't speak for all people with MS when it comes to fatigue (since we all have different things that trigger it), but our fatigue is very real, very hard to explain and very frustrating. I only fell asleep ~~twice~~ **four** times while writing this... not too bad.