



Difference Between Tiredness and Fatigue

What is Sleepiness?

Feelings of sleepiness build the longer a person stays awake. This has to do with the build-up of a chemical in the brain called adenosine. It's a signal that we need sleep. Since the levels of adenosine build up all day, the strongest drive for sleep occurs at the end of the day. As a result, most people feel sleepy in the evening, with an overwhelming desire for sleep at its highest peak right before the onset of sleep. Sleepiness is relieved by sleep itself.

What is Fatigue and Exhaustion?

Fatigue, exhaustion and low energy are felt deep in the bones and muscles, a heaviness to the limbs, as if you have just run a marathon. You can't summon the energy to accomplish what you need to. You're physically and mentally dragging through the day. No matter how extreme the fatigue, it doesn't always result in sleep. People who feel fatigued may lie down to rest or take a nap. However, they often don't fall asleep (though people with extreme sleepiness or drowsiness will be able to sleep if given the opportunity). Moreover, this sense of fatigue may not even be relieved by sleep.

Insomnia.

Not only does distinguishing between sleepiness and fatigue lead to a different set of possible causes to your problem but recognizing sleepiness can also contribute to improving insomnia.

It's critically important for people to only go to bed when they feel sleepy. If fatigue (or worse, time of night) is used as a prompt going to bed, this may result in lying awake for prolonged periods of time at the start of the evening, trying to fall asleep. As anxiety builds, it further overrides the signal for sleepiness. This is a major contributor to insomnia. One of the most effective remedies for insomnia is to delay your onset of sleep. It's counterintuitive, but effective. By staying up later, the desire for sleep builds. Instead of going to bed at 9pm, if you have insomnia, you may be advised to stay up until midnight. If you keep your wake time fixed to 6am, the sleep period becomes consolidated and it becomes easier to fall asleep. In addition, the quality and depth of sleep are enhanced. After an initial period of sleep restriction, the time spent in bed can be extended incrementally so that adequate hours of rest are obtained.

Potential Treatments

Consider carefully whether you're having more difficulty with sleepiness or fatigue. It may point to a distinct underlying cause and correcting it will depend on a different set of treatments. As you work to sleep better, reflect on your own needs and familiarise yourself with the feeling of sleepiness. If you continue to suffer from sleep that is either insufficient due to poor quality or from too few hours of sleep, seek help from a medical professional. It may be necessary to explore the condition with a sleep study. In some cases, your lack of sleep may relent with cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia (CBTI), a guided six-week program that optimizes sleep. CBTI can be provided by a sleep psychologist or through participation in a workshop or online course.

Stay Alert, Stay Safe

[Find out more on Yammer or the Fatigue Reduction site](#)

