

Yoga Support for Fatigue

An 8-pose gentle reset for low-energy days - designed around rest, pacing and listening to the body.

Fatigue can affect the body, concentration, motivation and emotional capacity. It may occur after periods of stress or poor sleep, alongside pain or illness, during hormonal change, because of medication or nutritional problems, or as part of a longer-term health condition. This guide does not assume that fatigue can be fixed by exercise. Instead, it offers a small, supported movement sequence that can be adapted or stopped at any point.

The principle: use less energy, not more

The purpose of this practice is to create gentle movement without turning it into another demand. You do not need to complete all eight positions. On some days, reclined breathing and a resting pose may be enough. Props, cushions, a chair and a wall are part of the practice, not signs that you are doing it incorrectly.

8-pose gentle reset - 5 to 10 minutes

1	Reclined breathing	30-60 seconds
2	Ankle circles	4-6 each way
3	Knees to chest	20-40 seconds
4	Supported butterfly	30-60 seconds
5	Legs on chair	1-3 minutes
6	Gentle twist	20 seconds each side
7	Legs up wall	1-3 minutes
8	Resting pose	1-3 minutes

A safety note

Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, unusual breathlessness, faintness or become unwell. New, persistent or worsening fatigue deserves medical assessment, particularly when it is unexplained or accompanied by other new symptoms. If you have a condition in which activity can cause delayed symptom worsening, follow condition-specific clinical advice and do not push through symptoms.

The eight movements

Each position can be shortened, supported or skipped.

1. Reclined breathing

Lie down or recline with your head, back and knees supported. Let the breath be natural rather than forcing deep breathing. Notice the surface supporting you and allow the shoulders to soften.

2. Ankle circles

While seated or reclined, slowly circle one ankle several times in each direction, then change sides. Keep the movement small if the joints feel stiff or sensitive.

3. Knees to chest

Bring one knee toward the body at a time, or both if comfortable. Hold behind the thigh rather than pulling firmly on the shin. A small movement is enough.

4. Supported butterfly

Recline with the soles of the feet loosely together and cushions beneath both knees. If this creates pulling or discomfort, keep the feet apart and allow the legs to rest in a neutral position.

5. Legs on chair

Lie or recline with the lower legs resting on a chair or sofa. Adjust the distance until the hips and knees feel easy. This can be used as a resting position rather than a stretch.

6. Gentle twist

With knees bent, allow them to move a small amount to one side. Return to centre and repeat on the other side. Keep both shoulders comfortable and avoid forcing the range.

7. Legs up wall

Rest the legs against a wall only if getting into and out of the position is easy. Legs on a chair or sofa are an equally valid alternative and may use less energy.

8. Resting pose

Finish in whichever supported position feels easiest. Use cushions, a blanket or reduced lighting if that helps the body settle. Rest for as little or as long as is comfortable.

You are allowed to stop early

Fatigue can create pressure to make the most of a 'better' moment. Try not to measure success by how much you complete. Stopping while you still have some capacity may be more useful than finishing the sequence and feeling depleted afterwards.

Understanding and working with fatigue

Fatigue is not always the same experience from one person - or one day - to the next.

Physical fatigue

The body may feel heavy, weak, achy or slow. Supported floor or chair-based positions may be more suitable than standing movement. Consider how much physical activity has already happened that day before deciding whether yoga is useful.

Mental and cognitive fatigue

Concentration, memory and decision-making can become harder. Keep instructions simple. Choose a familiar sequence, reduce choices and avoid turning the practice into something you have to remember perfectly.

Emotional and sensory fatigue

Stress, masking, social interaction, noise, light and constant demands can all contribute to feeling depleted. A quieter room, softer lighting, comfortable clothing and fewer instructions may be more supportive than adding more stimulation.

Boom and bust

A common pattern is doing much more when energy improves, then needing a long period of recovery. Pacing means considering the whole day: work, appointments, household tasks, caring responsibilities, exercise, social contact and sensory demands all draw from the same available capacity.

Very-low-energy version

Use just three stages: reclined breathing, a few ankle circles and a supported resting pose. If movement itself feels too demanding, rest is a valid choice.

Post-exertional worsening

Some health conditions involve symptoms becoming significantly worse after physical, cognitive or emotional exertion, sometimes hours or a day later. In this situation, generic advice to progressively increase exercise may be unsuitable. Keep activity within your individual limits and seek appropriate condition-specific advice.

Your fatigue and energy tracker

Look at patterns over time, including how you feel later in the day or the following day.

Day	Energy before	What I did	Immediately after	Later / next-day response
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Questions to notice

Before: What is my energy from 0-10? What have I already used energy on today? Is this fatigue familiar or different? What is the smallest amount that could feel supportive?

After: Has my energy stayed stable? Do I feel more settled, unchanged or more depleted? What happened several hours later? What would I change next time?

When to seek further support

Speak with a GP or qualified health professional if fatigue is persistent, worsening, unexplained or significantly interfering with everyday life. Fatigue can have many possible causes, including sleep problems, anaemia, thyroid conditions, infection, medication effects, nutritional deficiencies, pain, hormonal changes, mental-health difficulties and long-term medical conditions. Appropriate assessment matters.

Sources and clinical basis

This educational resource is informed by NHS guidance on tiredness and fatigue and NICE guidance relevant to conditions in which fatigue and activity intolerance may occur. Evidence for yoga varies between conditions and individuals, so it is presented here as optional supportive movement rather than a treatment for the underlying cause.

A message from Maggie

When you are fatigued, even things that are meant to help can become another expectation. You do not have to earn rest and you do not have to finish this routine. Use what feels supportive and leave what does not. Sometimes the kindest practice is one movement. Sometimes it is simply getting comfortable and stopping.

Space to Breathe Therapy - Educational wellbeing resource; not medical treatment.