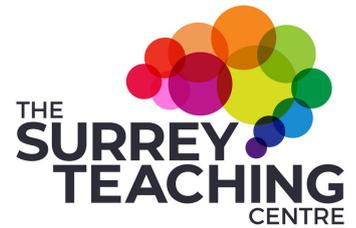


FATIGUE AFTER A BRAIN INJURY



Supporting in the Early Years...

WHAT IS FATIGUE?



Fatigue is a persistent feeling of exhaustion, lack of energy, and weakness that is not relieved by rest or sleep. Fatigue is a common effect of Acquired Brain Injury. Everyday tasks may take more effort, and tiredness can continue long after the injury.

RECOGNISING FATIGUE THROUGH THE EYFS LENS...



Fatigue may present differently across areas of learning within a play based EYFS curriculum:

- **Communication and Language:** child may stop responding, lose focus in conversations, or struggle to recall words.
- **Physical Development:** clumsiness, slower movements, reluctance to join physical play.
- **Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED):** tearfulness, irritability, withdrawal from peers.
- **Literacy & Mathematics:** reduced concentration, giving up quickly on tasks.
- **Understanding the World:** lack of curiosity or engagement in exploration.
- **Expressive Arts and Design:** loss of creativity, reluctance to join in group songs/dances.

STARTING OR RETURNING TO NURSERY/SCHOOL:



For many children, a gradual phased integration / re-integration to school following a brain injury will be appropriate, with considerations such as:

- planning to attend at optimal times of day when energy levels are highest
- attending for key learning activities that are highly motivating
- ongoing monitoring of fatigue levels throughout the day, and providing rest breaks / fatigue management strategies in school (see next page)
- regular review of the integration/re-integration plan



Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- create a safe space for rest
- model emotional literacy. “It’s okay to need a rest”.
- Support turn-taking in ways that don’t demand constant energy (e.g., choosing picture cards rather than moving around).



Communication and Language

- Use short, simple instructions when the child is fatigued.
- Offer visual supports (symbols, gesture, objects of reference).
- Provide quiet 1:1 story-sharing rather than large group carpet time when energy is low.



Physical Development

- Allow flexible participation in PE or outdoor play (e.g., sitting on a scooter rather than running).
- Plan for short bursts of activity instead of extended sessions.
- Provide adapted fine motor activities (chunked tasks, larger tools).

Strategies to support fatigue within EYFS continuous provision...



Expressive Art & Design / Understanding the world



- Provide opportunities to create in quiet, calm spaces (e.g., drawing at a table or quiet area).
- Allow choice in participation — e.g. observing a music session if tired.
- Use fatigue-friendly resources like pre-cut shapes, stickers, or simple percussion instruments.
- Offer sensory exploration in short, structured bursts.

Literacy & Mathematics



- Use the ‘little and often’ method when teaching new skills.
- Use shared reading in short sessions rather than long group stories.
- Break writing/drawing into short steps with frequent breaks.
- Use hands-on resources (counters, blocks) to reduce cognitive load.
- Keep tasks short and achievable to avoid fatigue-related frustration.
- When possible, plan literacy and maths activities earlier in the day and/or when energy is typically higher