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Fatigue

Just because you can't see the wind doesn't mean you doubt it exists. Because you can both see and feel the effects of the wind, you know the wind is reality. The fatigue often associated with lupus can easily be compared with the properties of the wind. Although fatigue itself is invisible, it exists, and its effects are a reality.

Some of the major reasons you may tire more easily include:

- Lupus may cause a decrease in the range of motion in your joints or a reduction in flexibility. More energy is needed to move such affected joints.
- Joints and muscles weakened by lupus' symptoms, or used less due to pain, swelling or stiffness, cause extra work for your other normal joints and muscles. This increase in workload produces rapid fatigue, even in your 'good' joints and muscles.

Some basic helpful hints for dealing with fatigue are:

- Plan your activities according to your available energy, instead of trying to fight your fatigue. Try alternating your tasks with rest periods, or break one job into smaller jobs. Making a concerted effort to conserve energy (especially in chores around the house) will also help you control your energy level.
- Be attentive to your body's signals, rather than ignoring those helpful hints. Learn to recognise your body's daily cycle and plan around the times when you usually feel tired. Take advantage of good days, but don't overdo. Over activity will only make a bad day worse.
- Accepting your limitations is probably the best way to deal with the frustration your restricted activities may cause. Realising what you can and can't do and finding pleasant alternate activities will minimize your frustration and depression.
- Exercise. It is not uncommon for a lupus patient to feel an overwhelming sense of fatigue, particularly after a flare-up of the diseases and an extended period of inactivity. You may find exercise helpful at this time. It should be done with the approval of your physician, sometimes physicians recommended the cardiac rehabilitation exercise programme to their lupus patients, as it increases endurance without being overly exertive.

The fatigue you're feeling is real. Just because you can't see it, don't doubt that your fatigue exists; rather do your best to deal with its effects. Being aware of your activity level, keeping your doctor informed about how you're feeling so he can tailor your treatment, and leaning on those close to you for help when needed can help you overcome the hidden aspect of lupus - FATIGUE.

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