



Program Information

The *Fatigue Clinic* is a multi-disciplinary health service for people with chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), post-viral fatigue syndrome or post-cancer fatigue (PCF). The program aims to improve functional capacity (both physical and cognitive) of people affected by fatigue disorders by applying graded physical and cognitive activity training in combination with cognitive behavioural techniques. The service is conducted at the University of New South Wales, and is coordinated by a team of medical and health professionals with expertise in the areas of infectious diseases, oncology, psychology, and exercise physiology.

Why a multi-disciplinary clinic?

A large amount of scientific evidence has demonstrated that graded exercise therapy (GET) and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) delivered by a team of healthcare professionals is an effective treatment for people diagnosed with a fatigue disorder. The exercise physiologist assesses the functional capacity of the individual and their unique fatigue patterns and triggers, before prescribing an individually tailored activity program. This includes activity-pacing techniques to balance limited energy supplies against day-to-day demands, followed by a carefully-monitored (home-based) graded activity program to increase physical activity levels. In addition, it is well recognised that people with a fatigue disorder commonly also experience cognitive disturbances (i.e. concentration and short-term memory difficulties), as well as sleep-wake cycle disturbances and changes in mood. The clinical psychologist employs cognitive-behavioural therapy, cognitive exercise therapy (CET) and sleep hygiene strategies to manage these issues. The two components of the program are closely integrated and so can only be provided in a combined format.

The *Fatigue Clinic* service is conducted with the support of your treating doctors. It is offered only to those patients for whom all other possible causes of fatigue (such as anaemia or thyroid disease) have been excluded, and who have no other significant medical problems which would prevent them from participating.

What does the program involve?

The treatment program runs over eighteen (18) weeks, five (5) consultations with an exercise physiologist and five (5) with a clinical psychologist. The final appointment occurs one to three months after you complete the program and is with the clinical psychologist. All your appointments are scheduled in advance. The treatment approach is based on the principles of self-management.



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What happens when I arrive at the clinic?

Prior to your first appointment, you will be asked to complete a series of questionnaires about your symptoms and your level of function – these will take about 20 minutes to complete, and we will ask you to repeat these at the end of the program (18 weeks) and again at 36 and 48 weeks after the program. You will have the option of completing these questionnaires online in the days prior to your first appointment (preferred) or, alternatively, when you arrive at the Clinic for your first appointment. If you choose to complete them in person at the Clinic, we ask that you arrive at least 20-30 minutes before your scheduled appointment to give you enough time to complete them. The information obtained from these questionnaires will complement the information obtained from the initial interview to allow the treating team to individually tailor the treatment to your illness pattern.

During your first appointment, you will consult with the exercise physiologist and clinical psychologist (each taking about 45-50 minutes). You will be given an 11-day diary to record the details of your sleep and activity patterns over the following two weeks. You will be required to purchase an activity monitor (e.g. pedometer, Fitbit) to record your activity during the day. You may also be asked to wear a wrist-watch device (an actigraph) to record your activity and sleep patterns. This information will help the exercise physiologist and clinical psychologist to develop the ideal activity program for you. The program is designed in collaboration between all three parties: the exercise physiologist, the clinical psychologist, and the patient. You will be expected to complete the agreed activities at home, and to implement the agreed strategies to address any other associated symptoms of your illness. The remaining visits during the 18-week program are crucial for monitoring your progress and upgrading your function periodically. Most importantly, the sessions are to identify and address the likely barriers that arise during your treatment program.

Does the *Fatigue Clinic* also do research?

As a division of the Faculty of Medicine at the University of NSW, the UNSW Fatigue Clinic has a strong research agenda. You may be invited to participate in a research study, but you are under no obligation to do so. More information will be given to you in the Clinic.



How much does it cost?

If you have been referred by your GP under a Care Plan you will receive the Medicare rebate as per the table below. This can be processed from the Clinic (there is no need to take your receipt to Medicare). The fees should be paid in full at each appointment. Payments can only be made by debit or credit card (no cash).

- Patients must be referred under an *Enhanced Primary Care Plan* (Item 721 & 723) by their GP to be eligible for a Medicare rebate for Exercise Physiology services. The rebate is \$54.60 per session for a maximum of 5 sessions within a 12-month period.
- Patients must be referred under a *Mental Health Care Plan* (Item 2710) to be eligible for a Medicare rebate for Psychology services. The rebate is \$128.40 per session for 5+1 sessions in a 12-month period. The rebate may be extended for an additional 4 sessions following the 6th session (i.e. a total of 10 sessions) on approval by the GP.

All patients with a valid Medicare card and GP referral will still receive the Medicare rebate on all services, however there will not be any bulk-billing for services.

The program fees are as follows:

Per Appointment Costs:			
Clinical Psychologist		Exercise Physiologist	
Appointment Cost	\$195.00	Appointment Cost	\$116.00
Medicare Rebate	\$128.40	Medicare Rebate	\$54.60
Out-of-Pocket	\$66.60	Out-of-Pocket	\$61.40

This means over the course of your 18-week Treatment Program you will pay:

- \$399.60 Clinical Psychologist (5+1 appointments)
- \$307.00 Exercise Physiologist (5 appointments)

Workers Compensation, Compulsory Third Party (CTP), or Income Protection Insurance claimants.

If you are a workers' compensation claimant, compulsory third party (CTP) claimant, or income protection insurance claimant, you should advise the *Fatigue Clinic* so we can arrange approval for your treatment. These agencies attract a separate fee schedule for *Fatigue Clinic* services.

Cancellation Policy

The UNSW Fatigue Clinic operates on an appointment only basis. Due to the appointment schedule being fully booked 18 weeks in advance and the extent of the waiting list, we require **at least 24 hours' notice prior to your scheduled appointment** to enable other patients to be scheduled into that session. Any cancellation should be in **writing via email** (fatigueclinic@unsw.edu.au), text message in reply to the reminder sent or phone message on the answering machine (93858272). The cancellation fee is 50% of the full fee for the appointment that has not been attended.