

Pain, Fatigue and Somatic Symptoms

“Somatic symptoms” is a term that includes both symptoms related to bodily functions and symptoms of pain. These are symptoms that occur in people whose bodies are otherwise normal. The most common somatic symptoms are:

- Headaches, stomachaches, chest pain
- Backaches, joint pains
- Arm or leg swelling, changes in skin color
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Trouble concentrating

These symptoms are REAL. They are not “all in the head”. Somatic symptoms are often related to the mind-body connection. They are a way your body reacts to changes in itself or in the environment. They can be associated with puberty.

The cause of somatic symptoms is neurotransmitters. These are chemicals your body uses to send messages about pain, discomfort, temperature, digestion, heartbeat, and many other things. When neurotransmitters are out of balance for a little while, somatic symptoms can result.

There are some things you can do to make your somatic symptoms feel better until your body is back in balance:

- Keep your body on a **sleep** schedule. (See below)
- Follow a regular schedule of **exercise**. Consider going for physical therapy to get advice about how best to strengthen yourself.
- **Eat** regular balanced meals
- Look at your schedule and decide if you are over-doing it with too many **activities**.
- Consider **talking** to a counselor about your stresses. Your body may be giving you clues about what is stressful to you.
- **Medicines** are not usually used for somatic symptoms unless there is also another condition present, such as anxiety or depression.

Sleep:

In order to improve restful sleeping, keep these things in mind:

- Go to bed at the same time each night. Keep the room dark – no computer TV or other screens
- Get up at the same time each day, including weekends (within an hour or so)
- Do not use the computer or television for 30 minutes before bedtime
- Establish a bedtime routine such as: warm bath, reading, deep breathing or relaxation, listen to music. This can be very important.
- Exercise daily
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and cold medicines

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