

TIREDDNESS - FATIGUE

General Practitioner Red Flags checklist for Patient Consultation

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- 1) **Chest pain – Palpitations**
- 2) **Shortness of breath** - at rest, on exertion, orthopnoea, paroxysmal nocturnal dyspnoea
- 3) **Daytime sleepiness** – associated with obstructive sleep apnoea – driving + occupation risk
- 4) **Syncope – Dizziness – ENT symptoms** (hearing, tinnitus, vertigo etc)
- 5) **Fever - Rigors - Night sweats - also check Travel History**
Check systems eg. Cardiorespiratory (infective endocarditis, TB) genitourinary including HIV risk factors, musculoskeletal etc
- 6) **Neurological symptoms** (Acute or Progressive) – headache, sensory, motor, speech, balance, vision etc
- 7) **Weight loss** (non-intentional) – **Eating + Drinking habits + Gastrointestinal** (upper and lower GI) + **Urinary symptoms** (UTI, prostate, diabetes etc)
- 8) **Pain** - persistent
- 9) **Bleeding** (especially menstrual/PVB, gastrointestinal) - **Bruising - Itching** – unusual
- 10) **Lumps (lymph nodes) – Skin Lesions – Swelling** - unusual
- 11) **Thoughts of harm**
- 12) **Past History + Family History** – especially cardiovascular, cancer, mental health

Murtagh's General Practice – Chapter 74: Tiredness/fatigue

Key facts and checkpoints (selected)

- The commonest cause of tiredness is psychological distress, including anxiety states, depression and somatisation disorder.
- In Jerrett's study, no organic cause was found in 62.3% of patients presenting with lethargy; the constant factors were sleep disturbance and the presence of stress in their lives. Many of them turned out to be suffering from psychological problems or psychiatric illnesses, including depression, anxiety state or bereavement.
- An important cause of daytime tiredness is a sleep disorder such as obstructive sleep apnoea, which results in periodic hypoventilation during sleep.
- Underlying disorders that need to be considered as possible causes of chronic fatigue are endocrine and metabolic disorders, malignancy, chronic infection, autoimmune disorders, primary psychiatric disorders, neuromuscular disorders, anaemia, drugs and cardiovascular disorders.