

Fatigue Following Burn Injury: A Burn Model System National Database Study¹

What is the study about?

Fatigue is a common symptom after a burn injury. The goal of this study was to determine how often adult burn survivors experienced fatigue and how severe their symptoms were. It also attempted to identify burn survivors who were most likely to be fatigued at 6, 12, and 24 months post-injury.

Who participated in the study?

This study reviewed data for 945 adult burn survivors from the Burn Model Systems National Database. Study participants were treated at one of 6 burn centers in the United States between April 1997 and January 2006. All participants met the criteria for being a severely burned person according to the American Burn Association.

How was the study conducted?

Fatigue was measured using the Vitality Scale of the 36-Item Short-Form Health Survey (SF-36). Patients were asked to recall their pre-injury fatigue levels when they were discharged from the hospital. Fatigue information was also collected at discharge 6, 12, and 24 months post-injury. The researchers looked at the relationship between fatigue and employment status, as well as fatigue and mental health scores at 6, 12, and 24 months post-injury. Researchers also looked at individual factors associated with greater fatigue.

What did the study find?

Researchers found that about one half of burn survivors continue to report fatigue at 24 months post-injury. Participants experienced fewer fatigue symptoms over time, but fatigue did not return to preinjury levels. Larger burn size was the strongest predictor of fatigue at 6 and 12 months post-injury. The study also found that older adults were more likely to experience fatigue at 6 months post-injury, women were more likely to experience fatigue at 12 months post-injury, and survivors with electrical burns were more likely to experience fatigue at 24 months post-injury. In addition, fatigue was associated with lower mental health scores and unemployment. The authors suggest that fatigue should be monitored over time in order to improve long-term outcomes.

The contents of this quick review were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90DP0082). However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of Department of Health and Human Services, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

¹ Simko, L.C., Espinoza, L.F., McCullen, K., Herdon, D.N., Suman, O., Fauerbach, J.A., ... Schneider, J.C. (2017). Fatigue Following Burn Injury: A Burn Model System National Database Study. *Journal of Burn Care & Research*. DOI: 10.1097/BCR.0000000000000625