

It must be remembered, finally, that there are many other causes for lethargy in people with PBC. Sometimes the effect of drugs and other medications administered to help may make lethargy worse. In other situations, undiagnosed diseases such as an under-active thyroid or an under-active adrenal gland may be implicated. Sometimes, too, there is an element of depression and it can be difficult to know whether symptoms of depression are the cause of the symptoms, or develop as a consequence of the lethargy and the associated reduction in the quality of life. It is important, as always, to look for treatable causes of lethargy before attributing it just to the PBC knowing that there was no specific treatment to improve what is often a disabling symptom.

Overall, therefore, lethargy can be a major problem in PBC. At present, we do not know the cause and we do not have an effective treatment. Researchers are aware of the implications of lethargy on the quality of people's lives and a few studies are now starting to look at causes. Once the causes are established, it may then be possible to direct therapy for this very important aspect of PBC.

INVESTING IN ENERGY

Let us consider time, money and energy. We spend all three. We sometimes try to save all three and occasionally, if we are being honest, admit to wasting them. Above all we'd like to have a lot more of each.

Time has its own controls. Try as we might, we cannot increase the amount of time available in the day so we are forced to consciously organise our time by making arrangements. Even putting things off to the next day is an arrangement!

Money too has built-in controls. The amount we have in our wallets, in our accounts, or on credit cards is a reminder of the limits. We organise our spending around these limits.

Although we talk of time, money and energy using the same language, we do not look at energy in the same way. We grow up assuming that energy is always there. The fatigue which can come with PBC teaches that this is not so. The level of fatigue can vary from hour to hour, from morning to afternoon, from day to day, from week to week, so let's look at handling this situation.

Fatigue is usually seen as having three kinds of causes:

Physical:	<i>illness, overweight, lack of sleep, dehydration</i>
Lifestyle:	<i>diet, level of activity, lack of fresh air, overwork, pattern of eating especially false energy foods</i>
Psychological:	<i>stress, depression, anxiety, feeling low, emotional strain, negative thoughts</i>

The articles in this folder will help us understand the medical aspects of fatigue, and that there are foods that steal energy and foods that give energy. There are important factors to remember when managing your energy.

As discussed elsewhere, 2% loss in bodily fluids can cause a 20% reduction in physical and mental performance. So, we need to drink more water to keep and increase energy levels.

In our case the main physical cause, illness, cannot be cured but we can learn to work with and round it. The psychological causes we have all experienced to some degree before PBC, so they are not new to us. It is just that PBC brings so many of these causes at the same time. Lifestyle causes are a mixture of habit, the stage of our lives and our responses to what is happening now.

All three categories of causes are interrelated, so we can't isolate one from another. The advantage of this interrelatedness is we have the chance to use the "ripple effect" in a positive way. Making a small change in one part of our life can influence parts that seem unreachable. Improving our movement can increase our energy levels and gives us more chance of doing everyday things more easily.

An audit of the use of energy can perhaps be even more valuable than an audit of spending. Why? Because we are worth it. Sounds selfish, doesn't it? Not so. **Using our precious energy to enhance our lives will add value to the lives of those around us too.**

We are most aware of the lack of physical energy, so let's start there. We tend to continue a pattern of output of physical energy until we can no longer do so. That is the equivalent of spending every penny of our income, of bankrupting ourselves. How sensible is that? When our income falls we either cut out buying some items, or we trade down to ones that cost less. We can do the same with our energy output to protect ourselves from becoming energetically bankrupt.

An energy audit starts by looking at those things we do regularly. Can we stop doing them, or trade down? A great aunt once told me regretfully that now she was getting older she had to choose between ironing the underwear or combing the fringes of the towels. That choice has never kept me awake at night. We all, however, do things out of habit which waste the energy we have. What are your energy extravagances? With what do you struggle to maintain so called "standards"?

Housework is energy-hungry. A washing machine is now seen as a necessity. If that's true for clothes, why not also for dishes – if the money is there, buy a dishwasher. If not, let them soak to make washing easier, then leave them to drip dry. Have you ever seen the amount of bugs on a dishtowel? Much more hygienic to let them drip.

Keep everything to hand. Store the clean sheets in the bedroom for which they are intended. This means your husband/son/daughter can change the sheets without asking, thus no long explanations and dragging oneself to the cupboard to point out what is to be used. If you must dust, keep a duster in each room. Remember that no-one ever died regretting they had not spent more time dusting.

Cut down on journeys up and down stairs, or from room to room, by collecting items in a small basket and making one journey. Never waste a journey, always take something with you. A dressing gown with pockets is useful for the bad days.

Cooking can swallow energy. When fatigued, we need to help ourselves in the kitchen. e.g., buying bags of prepared salads may seem expensive, but they are instant and effortless. There is no waste, they last well and do not require washing, trimming, or drying and are instant healthy eating.

Swap glass storage jars for lighter plastic ones. Keep a post-it pad, or wipe board, in the kitchen and make a note of what is needed as it runs out. Write out shopping lists in the order in which you walk round the store, so no waste of effort by backtracking.

Do the audit and let's cut out our version of combing the fringes of the towels. Energy, like currency, has no value unless it is in circulation, *i.e.*, moving. Since overspending of either leads to exhaustion, a fine balance has to be kept between expenditure and saving. Remaining static is not an option. Doing nothing is like putting money under the mattress, *i.e.*, no gains. Doing nothing physically leads to loss of condition and is mentally damaging because energy also has emotional and psychological aspects. These aspects can drain our reserves as well. They can also increase our energy.

Having things hanging over our heads drains energy unless we take action to deal with them. Take the required action. Where possible, ask someone else to do it, or reduce the status of what has to be done from important to unnecessary and leave it there. As the Americans put it, don't sweat the small stuff!

Sometimes investing energy can lead to a gain of energy – like obtaining interest on our money. It takes energy to go to the hairdresser, but the result can be an increase in well-being and interest. Some activities can operate in the same way. They can increase our serotonin levels and improve our mood. And so, in monetary terms, let's speculate to accumulate!

We know that taking a walk in the fresh air is good for us, but sometimes the problem is we run out of energy before we've walked back. We need to find ways of being active that match the energy available to us.

When totally fatigued, drinking a glass of water whilst sitting at an open window addresses one physical and one lifestyle cause of tiredness and who knows what we might see! Stretching out our legs – heels first – fully whilst lying in bed raises briefly – our level of activity. We can take these steps.

Purposeful movement, activity, exercise call it by any name – the result is to reduce the powerful effects of those psychological factors which drag us down. Activity can increase the levels of certain brain chemicals so that our mood is more positive. **Muscles which are in poor condition tire sooner than strong ones.** We know that exercise can improve our mood, our appearance and maintain our health.

Is the lift we get from going to the hairdresser from our improved appearance? From the chats we had? From seeing four different walls? From the activity of getting there? We don't know how much each element contributes.

What we do want is to invest enough energy in the right way, so we gain more, so we get interest on it, like the lift we get going to the hairdresser. We can't go there every day, but we can find other investment areas.

Energy, like money, can be frittered away without our really being aware we're doing it. One drain on our energy can be the way we respond to others. If we turn down requests or invitations by saying we are unwell, we reinforce that image most strongly to ourselves. Better to reply that you'd loved to have helped out, or come to visit but, unfortunately, you're not free to do so but hopefully the next time you'll be there. A much more positive response – also it leaves an opening for another invitation!

Management gurus claim that the difference between those at the very top and the wannabes, is the ability to get started. They charge entrepreneurs thousands of pounds to tell them to make a list at the end of each day so that next morning they hit the ground running. Getting started can sometimes be such a difficulty for us that we get nothing done, even those things we like to do.

Uncertainty wastes energy so, like those captains of industry, plan in advance. If there is something important to be done, plan it for your time of best performance. Do not be too ambitious. Make all targets manageable in the time available. Little plans of two or three specific items work best – I'll sort the white washing, put a load in the machine, then read the letters; at half past, I'll put the dishes in the sink, then make that telephone call.

When the plan is complete, STOP. Take a reward – have a cup of tea, read the newspaper, start the crossword. Never, ever put general items, such as 'tidy the room', on a plan. Split such items up into parts. That way, we can achieve success. After the reward, assess energy levels to see if another three point plan is possible. If the energy level is too low, tomorrow's plan is ready!