

Fatigue

RFQs

- Could I check to make sure that there is no suggestion of something serious going on? How has your weight been?
- (With you being overweight, have we ever thought about sleep apnoea? Do you stop breathing at night? Do you tend to nod off during the day?)
- Have you had any change in your bowel habit?
- What about bleeding from anywhere, from your bowels for example, or have your periods been heavy or irregular?
- What about changes in your water works, such as going more often, or even being particularly thirsty?
- Have your joints been OK? No swelling or stiffness? Have you noticed any lumps or bumps?
- Would you mind if I take a look at your skin, particularly on your hands. I'd like to check your blood pressure (sitting and standing). You don't appear to have any obvious physical symptoms to explain your tiredness. I wonder how much of this might be emotional. What do you think? What has been going on in your life recently? How is your mood? It might help us to talk about your habits, good and bad? Such as drinking, smoking or substance use?

Provide

I would usually leave it for a month before doing any blood, or urine, tests because so many patients with your symptoms get better within that time. Would that be OK?

(Simple blood tests are as revealing as multiple tests. After a focused history and examination, and once red flags are excluded, then doing only basic tests (Hb, ESR, TSH, glucose +/- coeliac) is sufficient. I'd also like to check a urine sample for blood and protein.)

I saw you a month ago with this problem. I wondered at the time about how much of your tiredness might be linked with your emotional stresses. Does that sound possible? Perhaps we could do those blood tests to rule out the possible physical causes of tiredness and then offer you some help with managing your emotional difficulties.

Safety net:

Do let me know if your sleeping partner tells you that you stop breathing at night, or if you are losing weight without effort, if you become particularly thirsty, or if your mood becomes dark.