

## Fatigue

Fatigue means feeling tired physically or mentally. Cancer or cancer treatments can cause fatigue. Cancer-related fatigue can be overwhelming. Your caregiver can also become fatigued.

### Causes

Fatigue may have many causes:

- The cancer itself
- The treatment
- Persistent pain
- Untreated symptoms or side effects from anemia or medications
- Other medical conditions: such as hypothyroidism or heart problems
- Stress from other factors: family problems, divorce or work
- Depression that lasts for more than two weeks
- Inadequate rest
- Poor diet
- Insufficient fluids
- Lack of exercise
- Lack of support from family and friends

### Symptoms

Some of the signs of fatigue are:

- A weak feeling over the entire body
- Difficulty concentrating
- Waking up tired after sleep
- Lack of energy or decreased energy
- Lack of motivation to be physically active
- Increased irritability, nervousness, anxiety or impatience
- No relief from fatigue, even with rest or sleep

### Prevention

Here are some things that may help manage feelings of fatigue:

- Prioritize your activities. Complete the most important tasks when you have the most energy.
- Delegate activities when you can.

- Place things that you use often within easy reach to save energy.
- Treat any medical problems that may contribute to fatigue.
- Drink enough fluid.
- Eat a balanced diet. Include plenty of protein: fish, lean meat/poultry, low-fat dairy, eggs/egg whites, legumes.
- Exercise: take short walks or other physical activity.
- Before you start any exercise program, discuss it with your health care team.
- Manage stress: exercise, relaxation, visual imagery, meditation, talking with others and counseling.
- Balance rest and activities.

## Report to Your Doctor



Apply the above tips first. Talk with your doctor if:

- Fatigue does not get better, keeps coming back or becomes severe. Signs of severe fatigue include spending all day in bed and inability to do daily activities.
- You are much more tired than you should be after an activity. Or if feeling tired has nothing to do with any activity.
- Fatigue cannot be relieved by rest or sleep. Fatigue disrupts your social life or daily routine.

Depending on the cause of your fatigue, there may be prescription medications to help reduce it. Your doctor may refer you to the Fatigue Clinic.

## Resources

Ask for “Energy Conservation” and “Sleep: Tips for a Good Night’s Rest.” Or request “A Patient Guide for Managing Cancer-Related Fatigue.”