

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 Rehabilitation Services.

Resources

Cancer-related Fatigue

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/fatigue-weakness-sleep/fatigue.html>

10 Tips to Get More Sleep

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/latest-news/how-to-get-more-sleep.html>

What to Do for Sleep Problems

<https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/cancer-control/en/booklets-flyers/getting-help-for-sleep-problems.pdf>