

# Cancer: Managing Fatigue



Cancer-related fatigue is extreme and persistent tiredness or exhaustion that can interfere with daily activities and your ability to function normally.. It's very common when you have cancer or are having cancer treatment.

There are several things that can cause fatigue. It can be caused by cancer treatments, worry, lack of sleep, low appetite and poor nutrition, less physical activity, pain, and other health issues. Fatigue can also be a sign of anemia. This is when your blood doesn't have enough red blood cells. You might need medical treatment for anemia. Red blood cells carry oxygen to all the cells in your body, and low levels can make you tired.

Talk with your healthcare team about your fatigue. They can help determine possible causes of your fatigue and suggest ways to help manage it. The tips below can also help you feel better.

## Saving your energy

- Keep track of the times of day when you are most tired and plan around them. For instance, if you are more tired in the afternoon, try to get tasks done in the morning.
- Decide which tasks are most important. Do those first.
- Pass tasks along to others when you need to. Ask for help.
- Accept help when it's offered. Tell people what they can do to help. For instance, you may need someone to fix a meal, fold clothes, or put gas in your car.
- Plan rest times. You may want to take a nap each day. Just sitting quietly for a few minutes can also make you feel more rested.



## Taking care of yourself

- Relax before you go to bed. Take a bath or read for a while.
- Keep regular hours. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning.
- Eat well. Choose foods from all of the food groups each day. Nutritional counseling may help. Try eating small several small meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Exercise. Ask your healthcare provider what type of exercise is safe for you. You may be able to take a brisk walk to help increase your energy.

- Don't have caffeine or alcohol. Drink plenty of water or fruit juices instead. Staying hydrated is key to preventing and treating fatigue.
- Ask your healthcare provider for ways to treat pain.
- Reduce stress levels. Consider trying support groups, counseling, meditation, and relaxation methods.

## Treating anemia

If you begin to feel more tired than normal, tell your healthcare provider. Fatigue could be a sign of anemia. This problem is common in people with cancer, especially during chemotherapy and radiation treatments. If your red blood cell count is too low, you may need medicine to increase the number of red blood cells your body makes. In some cases, you may need a blood transfusion.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider if you have any of the following:

- Shortness of breath or chest pain
- A dizzy feeling when you get up from lying or sitting
- Paler skin than normal
- Extreme tiredness that is not helped by rest or sleep

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