

## Fatigue

**Note: My NM Care corner is not intended to replace clinical care or management by a healthcare provider. If you have a medical emergency, please contact your healthcare provider.**

Cancer or cancer treatment can cause fatigue. It is different than feeling tired after not getting enough sleep or rest.

What is fatigue?

- It feels like persistent tiredness, lack of energy and motivation that can be both physical and mental.
- It interferes with daily life.
- It doesn't improve with rest.

People who have or had cancer may experience fatigue during and after treatment. If you experience fatigue, talk with your health care team, and it's helpful to share any new symptoms or changes in symptoms.

Medical conditions that may contribute to fatigue include:

- Chronic pain is often exhausting and many medicines prescribed for pain cause drowsiness and fatigue
- Poor nutrition
- Anemia or a decrease in the amount of red blood cells you have can be common in cancer patients. Patients with anemia may feel extreme and overwhelming fatigue

Certain treatment types contribute to fatigue. For example, people commonly experience fatigue at these times:

- A few days after chemotherapy,
- A few weeks after beginning radiation therapy, and
- After immunotherapy.

### Self-Care Strategies

Below are some strategies to try at home if you experience fatigue:

- Plan your day so you have time to rest between activities.
- If you take a nap during the day, make sure it's less than 30 minutes. Longer naps can lower your energy level and make it harder to sleep at night.
- Try to sleep 7-8 hours each night, and try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day. Having a regular sleep schedule can help you get enough sleep at night.

Stay active.

- Regular exercise, especially walking, is a good way to ease fatigue. It may also help you sleep better.
- Try a new exercise such as swimming or even dancing. Remember to check with your doctor before starting a new type of exercise.
- Multiple short sessions (5-10 minutes) of exercising throughout the day can help keep your energy levels up and reduce exhaustion.
- If you are able to, start by exercising 1-3 times per week for 10 minutes, and then add 5-10 minutes to your exercise sessions each week to gradually reach the physical activity

- recommendations of 150 minutes per week.
- Each day, prioritize your tasks. Decide which activities are the most important and focus on those first.
- Ask friends and family for help with things that you find too tiring or hard to do. This could include preparing meals, doing housework, or running errands.
- Don't push yourself for too long. Rest when you can and take breaks between activities.

### Nutrition Tips to Manage Fatigue

Like many other side effects, you can manage fatigue to some extent through your diet. This includes staying hydrated by drinking 8-10 glasses of non-caffeinated liquids every day. Another way to fight fatigue is to eat foods high in iron.

#### High iron food sources:

Animal Sources	Non-Animal Sources
Cuttlefish	Certain cereals, including Grapenuts®, Multigrain Cheerios®, Cream of Wheat®, and Fiber One®
Oysters	Sesame seeds
Mussels	Dried apricots
Crab	Lima, kidney, or black beans
Clams	Mixed nuts
Beef	Walnuts
Lamb	Sunflower seeds
Anchovy	Cooked spinach
Chicken	Dark chocolate
Turkey	Raisins
Pork	Dried figs
Eggs	Chickpeas
Salmon	Wheat bread
Scallops	Molasses
Shrimp	

### How Your Care Team can Help

There are many effective talk therapy treatments such as cognitive behavioral therapy that have been shown to help patients deal with fatigue. Ask your doctor for a referral to see a licensed mental health care provider.

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