



Fatigue

Fatigue—feeling tired and weak, lacking energy, or having no pep—is the most common symptom reported by cancer patients. It can be a result of the cancer itself, radiation, chemotherapy, surgery, low blood counts, lack of sleep, pain, stress, poor appetite, and pain relievers, along with many other factors.

The fatigue experienced by a person with cancer is different from fatigue of everyday life. Cancer-related fatigue can appear suddenly. It can be overwhelming. Rest does not easily relieve it. Fatigue can last 6 to 12 months after treatment ends. Fatigue does get better. Over time, fatigue gradually resolves.

- Symptoms:**
- Feelings of weakness, exhaustion, tiredness, lack of energy, being drained.
 - Unable to carry on with normal daily activities.
 - Unable to concentrate and remember things.
- Self-care measures:**
- Keep a journal to identify when you have the most energy and when you feel fatigue. Share this information with your health care providers to help you set realistic goals for what you can expect of yourself.
 - Set priorities. Save your energy for the most important things.
 - Become comfortable having others do some things for you that you usually do.
 - Plan your day so that you have time to rest.

- Take short naps or breaks, rather than one long rest period.
- Develop a routine and environment that promote restful sleep. Examples include using warm baths, light reading, and soothing music as well as controlling noise, lighting, and room temperature.
- Activities that can give you more energy include meditation, prayer, yoga, guided imagery, and visualization.
- Do daily exercise such as light housework or walking. Talk to your health care provider before starting any exercise program.
- Some ways to conserve energy and decrease fatigue are listening to music, reading, or going to the movies.
- Eat a healthful diet.
- Limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Join a support group. Sharing your feelings with others can ease the burden of fatigue. You can learn coping hints from talking about your situation. Your health care provider can put you in touch with a support group in your area.



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

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