Article Series Managing Fatigue All

How Your Sleep Habits Can Help Manage Fatigue

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Lack of sleep can be a cause of cancer fatigue. At the same time, you may experience fatigue no matter how much sleep you get.

That’s to say: the relationship between sleep and fatigue is complicated.

Still, sleep is one of the areas where small changes to your routines and habits may make a difference and help you feel more in control. For instance, you may not have

control over how your cancer — and your treatment — affect your body. But you probably do have at least some control over choices about when to go to sleep, when to rest during the day, and the activities that help you feel energized.

Here’s another reason better sleep can be important. Some cancer treatments can damage healthy cells and tissue. And sleep is a period when the body can repair damaged cells and tissue.

The following **Microsteps** may be taken to help you manage fatigue more effectively. Some are directly related to sleep, while others may help you manage your energy throughout the day and set you up for a good night’s sleep. As always, consult with your care team for the management practices that are best for you. You can also consider consulting a healthcare professional who specializes in sleep disorders to understand and uncover causes and triggers.

Setting a consistent bedtime and wake up time.

Research shows that this consistency may be beneficial for people living with cancer. You may try aiming for consistency with your nightly bedtime and morning wakeup time to minimize disturbances.

Taking short rest breaks.

Resting may help you manage your fatigue, so you may try setting aside time each day to close your eyes. Try not to sleep for more than 30 minutes, since longer naps may make it harder to sleep when bedtime comes around.

Setting a daily caffeine cut-off to improve your sleep.

Caffeine can make it harder to fall asleep if consumed too late in the day. Therefore, a caffeine cut-off about six hours before bed may help.

Setting an evening exercise cut-off.

Gentle exercises can be effective at reducing cancer fatigue. But physical activity too close to bedtime may disrupt your sleep, so consider including exercise and movement in the earlier part of your day.

Taking a few minutes in the morning to set your priorities for the day.

Managing fatigue means managing your energy. Deciding what's important and pacing yourself may help with setting priorities and identifying tasks that are worthy of your limited energy. And as always, consult with your care team to get recommendations that are best for you.

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