Article Series Managing Fatigue All

Managing Cancer-Related Fatigue

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All Managing Fatigue

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For some people, living with cancer can also mean living with fatigue. Fatigue is one of the most common cancer symptoms and treatment side effects, affecting more than 80 percent of people living with cancer.

With cancer fatigue, you may feel exhausted and drained physically and mentally, no matter how much you've exerted yourself — and no matter how much sleep or rest you get.

There are many possible causes for fatigue, and they can be connected to both your physical and mental health. For instance, going through your daily routine might make you feel tired. Fatigue may also be associated with depression and anxiety.

Then, there’s the cancer itself, with its physical effects on your body. Cancer can affect organs, muscles, hormones, and more, leading to feelings of tiredness. And cancer treatment is yet another common cause of fatigue.

While fatigue is often a part of living with cancer, it’s also true that there are small steps that can be taken that may help you stay energized and manage your fatigue. Here are some **Microsteps** to consider trying. As always, consult with your care team for the management practices that are best for you.

Taking short rest breaks.

Resting may help you manage your fatigue, so consider setting aside time each day to close your eyes. You may want to limit your nap to no more than 30 minutes, since longer naps may make it harder to sleep when bedtime comes around.

Adding one gentle aerobic exercise to your daily routine.

Trying to be more physically active when you’re tired might sound counterintuitive. But research shows that exercise may help reduce cancer fatigue and improve quality of life. Walking, jogging, cycling, yoga and Tai Chi are among the exercises that may make a difference.

Knowing your fatigue warning signs.

Common signs of fatigue include tired eyes, tired legs, and stiff shoulders. There may be mental signs, too, such as impatience, anxiety, and difficulty focusing. Be on the lookout for your signs so you can rest when needed and plan your day accordingly.

Talking to your care team about exercise during treatment.

Research shows that exercising during treatment may help reduce cancer fatigue. Consider working with your care team to create a personalized plan.

Asking your care team about your sleep.

Cancer may change your definition of a good night’s sleep. Since the relationship between sleep and fatigue can be complicated, consider checking in with your care team to determine how many hours a night you should be sleeping and how you can effectively rest during the day.

Picking up one magnesium-rich vegetable you haven’t tried before at the grocery store.

Many vegetables are rich in nutrients like magnesium that may help alleviate fatigue. For veggies highest in magnesium, look to the leafy greens like spinach, collard greens, and turnip greens.

Trying fatty fish instead of meat in one meal each week.

Fatty fish like salmon and mackerel, are rich in omega-3 fatty acids that may lower inflammation and reduce fatigue.

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