

Managing nutritional concerns: Fatigue

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Fatigue is one of the most common symptom experienced by patients receiving treatment for cancer. Fatigue often persists well beyond the course of active treatment. It is often described as feeling very weak, tired, or having lack of energy. Multiple factors such as cancer treatments, poor nutrition, dehydration, stress, anemia, pain, and certain medications can cause fatigue. Fatigue may cause you to have difficulty performing activities of daily living, difficulty concentrating, lose your appetite, or make you feel sad.¹

Tips For People Experiencing Fatigue^{2,3}:

- Listen to your body. Schedule short naps or rest periods throughout the day and get quality sleep at night
- Keep active. Taking a short walk or exercising for a short time daily can help you feel better
- Try relaxation exercises such as stretching, yoga, massage, or aromatherapy
- Keep a daily log of when your fatigue levels intensify. This can help your doctor or nurse identify factors that may be contributing to your fatigue such as sleep/wake disturbances and other side effects
- Plan your day so you aim to accomplish the most important activities first
- Accept help from family members and friends to shop and prepare meals for you, run errands, or do housework
- Choose foods high in protein and calories
- Eat small frequent meals (5-6 times a day) to keep up your strength, instead of 3 large meals
- Be sure to stay hydrated. Drink a minimum of 8-10 8 oz glasses of fluid per day
- Try nutritional supplements or liquid meal replacements if recommended by your physician and healthcare team

Communicate with your doctor or nurse about what you are experiencing. Contact your doctor or nurse if you are not able to do your normal everyday activities, or if you still experience tiredness after resting or sleeping, or are feeling sad or depressed.

References:

1. Fatigue. American Cancer Society.
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3. American Institute for Cancer Research, Savor Health and LIVESTRONG. *Heal Well: A Cancer Nutrition Guide*. 2013.
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