

# Managing Treatment-Related Fatigue

Cancer-related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of treatment. Typically, it comes on suddenly and is not relieved by rest or sleep. Fatigue is usually experienced a few days following treatment and can last from 1 – 6 months.

## What to Do

Prioritize your activities to conserve energy or schedule important activities earlier in the day. You can conserve energy by planning ahead, organizing your work, pacing yourself, and scheduling breaks to rest.

Exercising daily will help you feel less tired and improve blood circulation, which will improve treatment efficacy. Try walking for 30 minutes daily and/or participate in light weightlifting to boost your energy level.

Eat a balanced diet rich in protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to provide fuel for your body. Drinking plenty of clear liquids promotes better oxygen flow throughout your entire body and increases your energy level.

Establish and follow a sleep routine. Too much or too little sleep can lead to fatigue.

- Limit naps to 30 minutes twice a day.
- Go to sleep only when you feel tired.

If you have difficulty sleeping try something relaxing to do before bed, such as taking a hot bath, listening to music, reading a book, meditating, praying, or using guided imagery.

Avoid caffeine and alcohol as both are stimulants and will interrupt or interfere with your sleep. Adjust your expectations or “to-do” list to improve your stress management. Try to limit daily tasks to one or two per day.

## Symptoms of Fatigue

- Low energy level
- Overall weakness
- Difficulty completing daily activities
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Needing to rest after normal physical activity

## Causes of Fatigue

- Anemia caused by chemotherapy
- Combination therapy (two treatments given simultaneously)
- Dehydration
- Unrelieved pain
- Lack of exercise
- Side effects related to pain and/or other treatment-related medications
- Sleep disturbances
- Anxiety or depression
- Poor appetite