

Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms experienced by cancer patients. Cancer-related fatigue is more difficult to manage than fatigue felt occasionally by those who do not have cancer. Managing fatigue is an essential part of your health care. Be sure to speak with a healthcare professional if you are experiencing fatigue.

Why does fatigue occur?

Cancer-related fatigue primarily occurs because the body requires additional energy to repair tissue damaged by cancer treatment. Other side effects of cancer treatment such as pain or anemia can cause or make fatigue worse, as well as certain medications, stress, other medical conditions, changes in sleep, and decreased exercise. Your age, general health, activity level prior to starting treatment, and treatment type can also play a role in how fatigue may affect you.

How do I manage fatigue?

Fatigue can have a serious impact on quality of life and make it difficult to prepare and eat healthy nourishing meals. The body needs nutrients like protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water to function. Improper nutrition can make your symptoms worse. The following tips can help you manage your fatigue:

- **While rest is important, too much rest can make you feel more tired so stay as active as possible.**
 - Try going for a daily walk.
 - Talk to your healthcare team before beginning any exercise program.
- **Go no longer than 4-5 hours without eating throughout the day.**
 - Try to eat a balanced breakfast every day.
 - Try to eat small meals and snacks rather than large meals.
- **Eat foods that provide sustainable energy; avoid foods that do not.**
 - Try to include a source of protein at every meal to sustain energy released from food.
 - Try to limit sweets and sugary foods.
 - Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and chocolate in the evening.
- **Stay hydrated by drinking liquids throughout the day.**

- **Stock your kitchen with easy-to-prepare foods and meals.**
 - Ask your family and friends to help you shop for food and prepare meals.
 - Prepare food when you feel your best, and save it for later.
 - Prepare large amounts of your favorite meals then freeze meal-sized portions for later.
- **Try keeping a food and fatigue journal to find patterns that trigger fatigue.**
- **Discuss fatigue with your healthcare team.**
 - Ask your doctor to check for nutrient deficiencies, such as protein, iron, B vitamins, and vitamin D.
 - Talk to your healthcare team about other side effects such as anemia, pain, or vomiting.