

CANCER INSTITUTE PROGRAMS

FATIGUE

Everyone gets tired. This is a universal sensation that is expected to occur at certain times of the day or after certain types of activities. Tiredness usually has an identifiable cause, is short-lived and is easily dissipated by a good night's sleep or rest. In contrast, the fatigue experienced by people with cancer is often described as an unusual or excessive whole-body tiredness that is unrelated or disproportionate to exertion and that is not easily dispelled by rest or sleep.

Fatigue is one of the most common side effects associated with cancer and cancer therapies.

Factors that Contribute to Fatigue:

- Medical conditions (i.e. anemia, infections)
- Side effects of treatment (radiation and chemotherapy) or medications
- Inadequate rest
- Inadequate nutrition or fluid intake
- Lack of physical activity/exercise or too much activity
- Limited social supports
- Depression, stress and anxiety

Tips for Coping with Fatigue:

1. **Medical:** Let your physicians and nurses know that you feel fatigued. Don't hide it. There may be a medical cause that can be easily treated.
2. **Rest:** Balance rest and activity. Be aware that your needs may change daily. Try to take small naps during the day. Try to keep to a regular daily routine that is reasonable. Do things that are most important to you when your energy level is the greatest. Report Sleep disturbance to your physician.
3. **Exercise:** Discuss with your physician if you can start an exercise program (walking, resistance exercises or cycling). Exercise can significantly help to relieve fatigue. Start slowly at first and work up to a program you can live with. Give yourself time to develop strength and endurance.
4. **Nutrition:** Drink lots of water during the day. Eat a well-balanced diet with frequent, small meals. Avoid caffeine in the evening.
5. **Conserve Energy:** Family and friends are almost always happy to help out in any way they can.
6. **Stress:** Practice stress management by utilizing programs such as Relaxation and Guided Imagery, spiritual support, therapeutic counseling, support groups and journaling.

Remember that fatigue caused by cancer treatment is temporary and that your energy will slowly improve.

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Iwamoto, R.R., Haas, M., Gosselin, T., (Eds.). (2012) *Manual for Radiation Oncology Nursing Practice and Education* (4th ed.). (p 53-59) Pittsburgh, PA: Oncology Nursing Society
If you would like to do further reading and/or research on this subject, you may find the following resources helpful:

Publications

Chemotherapy and You: A Guide to Self-Help During Treatment
National Cancer Institute, NIH Publication No. 97-1136 (800) 4-CANCER

Radiation and You: A Guide to Self-Help During Treatment
National Cancer Institute, NIH Publication No. 95-2227 (800) 4-CANCER

“Seven Ways to Manage Cancer-Related Fatigue” from American Cancer Society

Choices, Third Edition. Morra, Marion and Eve Potts. Avon Books 1994.

A Cancer Survivor’s Almanac
Edited by Barbara Hoffman, JD. Chronimed Publishing

Websites

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org

Cancer Care, Inc.

www.cancercareinc.org

The Cancer Journey:

www.thecancerjourney.org

Cancer.net

www.cancer.net

OncoLink

www.oncolink.upenn.edu/support/fatigue

NCCN

[www.nccn.com/living-with-](http://www.nccn.com/living-with-cancer.html)

[cancer.html](http://www.nccn.com/living-with-cancer.html)

Hoag Cancer Center offers the following complementary programs:

- Fitter Image: Step Aerobics, T'ai Chi & Yoga
- Relaxation and Guided Imagery Workshop
- Journaling Workshop
- A variety of support groups
- Chaplaincy Services

Please refer to the Cancer Institute’s Support Services Calendar for meeting days and times and call (949) 764-5542 to confirm program information.