

Fatigue (feeling weak and tired)

Fatigue is always feeling tired or exhausted and is not related to exercise or activity. Fatigue during cancer treatment is common. It does not mean that the cancer is getting worse or that the treatment is not working.

Fatigue may be present before cancer is diagnosed or it may be related to cancer treatment. Causes of fatigue can include:

- anemia (low red blood cell count)
- feeling depressed
- having pain
- taking certain medications
- having trouble sleeping
- not eating or drinking well
- losing weight

Tips to reduce fatigue

Move your body

- Be physically active if you can. Ten minutes two or more times a day will increase your energy.
- Choose activities you enjoy such as walking, swimming or cycling.
- Be active when you feel you have the most energy.
- Learn your limits. Do not get overtired.

Sleep and rest

- Rest when you feel tired.
- Nap during the day if you need to. Limit nap time to one hour.

- Try to relax before bedtime. Have a warm bath or sit quietly and listen to music.
- Try to go to bed at the same time.

Nutrition

- Try eating five to six small meals a day instead of three large ones. This provides your body with more energy throughout the day.
- Have foods available that require little preparation such as: frozen meals, canned soup and fish, eggs, cereal bars, crackers, yogurt and pudding cups.
- Drink plenty of fluids such as juice, milk and water.
- Try ready to drink liquid nutritional supplements (e.g. Boost, Ensure).

Seek support

- Share your feelings with family, friends or counselors. Ask about a support group.
- Accept offers of help.
- Asking for help is okay too.
- Talk to your employer. Ask if you can work from home, work fewer hours or take time off from your job.

Tell your nurse or doctor how you feel. Ask if there are ways to treat your fatigue.