

Managing Chemotherapy Side Effects

Fatigue

(Feeling weak and very tired)



"I was so tired. It was hard to do even simple things. My nurse said to stay as active as I could. I found that taking short walks each morning gave me more energy during the day."

Tell your doctor or nurse if:

- You are not able to do your normal activities
- You are still very tired, even after resting or sleeping

Why do I feel so tired?

Chemotherapy can make you tired. So can other things like anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. Being depressed or in pain, taking certain medicines, or having trouble sleeping can also make you feel tired.

Make a plan to feel less tired.**Do less. Let others help you.**

- Do activities that are most important first.
- Ask others for help.
- Take time off from your job, or work fewer hours.



Many people find it helpful to keep track of their energy level. Some people write down how they are feeling each day in a notebook to share with their doctor. Others use their smart phone or a computer. Tracking can help you and your doctor figure out how to manage or treat your fatigue.



Eat and drink well.

- Make healthy foods when you feel well. Freeze them to eat later.
- Eating helps you keep up your strength. Some people find it easier to eat 5 or 6 small meals or healthy snacks instead of 3 big meals.
- Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of water a day. Keep water with you and take small sips during the day.

Be as active as you can.

- Try to exercise every day. Even 15 to 30 minutes a day can help give you energy.
- Take a walk or ride an exercise bike.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about other exercises that can help. Stretching, yoga, or Tai Chi help some people.

Take time to rest.

- Listen to your body. Rest when you feel tired.
- Try to take short naps that are 1 hour or less, during the day.
- Make a bedtime routine. Bathing or listening to music before you go to sleep may help you relax.
- Sleep at least 8 hours every night.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine or treatments can help me?
3. What foods and drinks are best for me?
4. How much liquid should I drink each day?
5. What exercises can help me feel better?
6. How should I track my energy level? What should I write down and share with you?



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How can we help?

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)

Web: www.cancer.gov

Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:

www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects

