

# Fatigue

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Fatigue is the most common side effect of cancer and cancer treatments. Symptoms of fatigue include weakness, tiredness, sadness, difficulty thinking, lack of energy, and dizziness. You may feel fatigued due to the cancer itself or because of stress, diarrhea, dehydration, chemotherapy, daily radiation treatments, anemia, or infection.

## Tips for Coping with Fatigue

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- Keep a diary of your symptoms.
  - Write down things that make you more fatigued and things that make you feel better.
  - Note how often you become fatigued and how long the fatigue lasts.
- Nap during the day and try to get good-quality sleep at night. Rest when you feel the worst.
- If you can, try to do mild exercise or physical activity each day. Check with your doctor before starting any new or unfamiliar exercise and before you increase your activity.
- Ask your friends and family to help you shop for food and prepare meals.
- Stock your kitchen with easy-to-prepare and easy-to-eat foods, such as those listed at the end of this handout.
- Try to eat small, frequent meals and snacks that consist of favorite foods and beverages.

- Choose foods and drinks that are good sources of calories, protein, and fiber to make the most of each bite and swallow. A registered dietitian (RD) can help you identify choices that are right for you.
- Drink at least 8 cups of fluid per day to stay hydrated.
- Limit caffeine-containing beverages to two per day and consume them early in the day so they don't interfere with your sleep.
- Enjoy your meals in a pleasant environment.

## Working with Your Health Care Team

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In addition to trying the tips in this handout, seek out personalized advice from your doctor and others on your health care team. Topics to discuss include:

- Any symptoms of fatigue that you experience
- Ways to help you feel better and more energetic
- Tips for planning activities and rest periods
- Use of nutritional supplements, such as liquid meal replacements
- Use of medications to help relieve your symptoms of fatigue

### Easy-to-Prepare and Easy-to-Eat Foods to Keep on Hand

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| • Fresh fruits and vegetables   | • Dairy foods (milk, yogurt, ice cream, and cheese)                       |
| • Hard-cooked eggs  | • Potatoes (refrigerated or frozen products or boxed mixes)               |
| • Beverages (fruit juices, sport drinks, liquid nutritional supplements, teas, bottled water, lemonade, lattes) | • Snacks (pretzels, popcorn, trail mix, dried fruit, chips, and crackers) |
| • Frozen, canned, or packaged foods (soups, tuna, vegetables, fruits, beans, entrées, and hot and cold cereals) | • Bakery items (muffins, bagels, rolls, pastries, and cookies)            |