

Fatigue

Fatigue, usually described as feeling tired, weak or exhausted, affects most people during cancer treatment. Cancer fatigue can result from the side effects of treatment or the cancer itself.

When to contact your doctor

Some fatigue during cancer treatment is to be expected. But if you find that cancer fatigue is persistent, lasting weeks, and interferes with your ability to go about your everyday tasks, tell your doctor.

Tell your doctor right away if you experience:

- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Loss of balance
- Inability to get out of bed for more than 24 hours
- Severe shortness of breath
- Worsening signs and symptoms

Self-care options

Coping with fatigue might require things you can do on your own. You might try to:

- **Take it easy.** Set aside time in your day to rest. Take short naps — no longer than an hour throughout the day rather than resting for one long period.
- **Conserve your energy.** Save your energy for your most important activities. Keep track of the times when you feel your best, and plan to do your important activities during those times. Ask for help when needed.
- **Maintain your energy.** Drinking lots of fluids and eating well can help keep your energy reserves up. Limit or avoid caffeine and alcohol. If nausea and vomiting make it hard to eat, talk to your doctor about these side effects.
- **Get moving.** When you feel up to it, light exercise throughout the week may help you preserve your energy level. Exercise regularly as you start treatment. You'll get in the routine of exercising, and it may even help you prevent fatigue during treatment.

Speak up about your fatigue

Don't assume the fatigue you're experiencing is just part of the cancer experience. If it's frustrating you or affecting your ability to go about your day, it's time to talk with your doctor.

Though fatigue is a common symptom when you have cancer, there are steps you can take to reduce or cope with your condition. If you're feeling fatigued, talk with your doctor about what factors might be causing your fatigue and what you can do to improve them.