

Fatigue after Chemotherapy

Adapted from: <https://www.eviq.org.au/patients-and-carers/patient-information-sheets/managing-side-effects/3424-feeling-tired-fatigue-during-cancer-treatment>

Who gets fatigue?

Most people who have cancer treatment get fatigue. It can happen during treatment with chemotherapy, radiotherapy or targeted therapies.

Everyone gets tired sometimes, but when you are having cancer treatment this can be much worse than usual. This is called cancer-related fatigue (CRF). With CRF, you may still feel tired even after having a sleep or rest.

Fatigue is usually caused by your treatment, but can sometimes be caused by other things. Read the Common questions section on the next page, or talk to your doctor or nurse, for more information about the causes of fatigue.

See the next page for tips on managing fatigue.

At your next visit, tell your doctor, nurse or radiation therapist if you:

- are spending most of the time in bed
- are having trouble concentrating
- have trouble sleeping
- feel tired all the time
- can't do your normal daily activities

Physical activity

- Being active helps many people to manage fatigue.
- Try to do some exercise or activity every day.

Relaxation

- Activities that relax the mind as well as the body can help with fatigue.
- Some people find that spiritual practices, like meditation, prayer or yoga can help.
- Other people relax by doing activities that they enjoy, like reading, listening to music, painting, or spending time with family and friends.

Tips to manage fatigue

Get a good night's sleep

- Try to go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
- Do something that relaxes you before bed, for example:
 - have a bath
 - read a book
 - listen to music.
- Don't use computers or smart phones just before bed.
- Don't have caffeinated drinks in the late afternoon or evening.
- Don't drink alcohol to help you sleep.

Rest during the day

- If you feel tired in the daytime, have a nap.
- Keep daytime naps short – no more than one hour.
- Don't nap close to bedtime.

Do less work

- Ask family and friends to help you with jobs around the house.
- If possible, try to do less hours at work or get help from your workmates.

Choose what to do

- Do the things that are important to you when you don't feel so tired.

Be active

- Try to do some gentle exercise, like going for a walk every day if you can.

Eat and drink properly

- Eat a healthy, well balanced diet (including 3 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit each day).
- Try eating small meals regularly to keep your energy levels up.
- Drink enough water or fluid every day (8 cups or 2 litres of fluid unless you are on a fluid restricted diet).

Common questions

What causes fatigue?

Fatigue during cancer treatment can be caused or made worse by:

- your cancer
- your treatment – surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or targeted therapies
- a low red blood cell count (anaemia)
- some medicines
- some other illnesses
- pain
- nausea and vomiting
- trouble sleeping or not getting enough sleep
- having depression or anxiety
- not eating and drinking properly.

Does fatigue get better?

Fatigue usually improves after treatment. However, for some people, it can last for months or years after treatment.

 Things to ask your doctor, nurse or radiation therapist

- Will I get fatigue during my treatment?
- What can I do to manage fatigue?

Contact numbers:

Daytime:

Night/weekend:

.....

Key Terms

- **fatigue:** feeling tired or sleepy, or having no energy
- **cancer-related fatigue (CRF):** fatigue caused by cancer or cancer treatment (CRF can be worse than normal fatigue)
- **caffeinated drinks:** drinks containing caffeine, e.g. coffee, tea, energy drinks