



Patient Education Sheet

Oncology Nursing Society
125 Enterprise Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1214
USA
+1-412-859-6100
www.ons.org



How Can I Manage Fatigue?

Fatigue is one of the most common symptoms experienced by people with cancer. It can be part of the disease process or its treatments, and it can persist after treatments are completed.

Here are simple tips and techniques that you can discuss with your healthcare provider to relieve fatigue.

Most Helpful

- **Exercise:** The types of exercise that would be most beneficial vary according to your current lifestyle, the stage of your disease, and the nature of your treatment. Talk to your healthcare provider about what exercises you can do safely without exhausting yourself.

Likely to Be Helpful

- **Energy conservation/activity management:** Energy conservation is the practice of using peak energy times to do certain tasks while being careful not to exhaust yourself for the rest of the day. Activity management is a combination of selecting when to do certain tasks, pacing yourself, and determining what you can do versus delegate to others.
- **Education:** Learning about cancer's effects on the body and how you can alter your self-care may help in coping with fatigue in a more positive way.
- **Massage and healing touch:** A Swedish massage is a general whole-body massage that manipulates the body's soft tissues. The objective is to restore function and release tension. Healing touch is a technique that may or may not involve lightly touching the person. It is said to restore energy fields around the body. Breathing techniques and relaxing music are often combined with these interventions.
- **Relaxation techniques:** Progressive relaxation combines breathing techniques, visualization, and body positioning to help ease tension in every part of the body.
- **Screening for other medical conditions:** Many medical conditions besides cancer can contribute to fatigue (e.g., undiagnosed hypothyroidism, adrenal insufficiency). Simple blood tests can uncover these problems, and appropriate treatment can help alleviate fatigue caused by the conditions. Ask your physician if you have been screened for hypothyroidism, cardiac and lung problems, imbalances in sex or adrenal hormones, fluid or electrolyte imbalances, anemia, and depression. Sedation effects of some drugs and drug-drug interactions also can worsen fatigue.

How Can I Manage Fatigue?
Patient Education Sheet
(continued)

Oncology Nursing Society
125 Enterprise Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1214
USA
+1-412-859-6100
www.ons.org

Likely to Be Helpful (*continued*)

- **Techniques to improve sleep quality:** These consist of simple behavior modification practices, such as avoiding caffeine and stimulating activities in the evening, going to bed at the same time every night, avoiding long naps late in the afternoon, and using the bedroom solely for sleep and sexual activities. This can help normalize your internal “sleep clock” and maximize your quality of sleep.

May or May Not Be Helpful

- **Erythropoietin:** This drug is given to correct anemia, which most patients with cancer will have sometime during their illness.

Not Enough Evidence

Although you may find that these techniques work for you, not enough studies have been done to show that they work to alleviate fatigue.

- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy with foot soak and reflexology
- Distraction/virtual reality immersion
- Expressive writing
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Psychotherapy
- Soy protein supplementation with nutritional counseling
- Yoga
- Drugs:
 - ATP
 - Bupropion (sustained release)
 - Donepezil
 - L-carnitine
 - Methylphenidate
 - Medroxyprogesterone + celecoxib + enteral food supplementation
 - Modafinil
 - Paroxetine

Questions for Your Healthcare Provider

Always consult your healthcare provider before adding any new treatments or other interventions into your routine.