

*Having fatigue does not always mean that your treatment is not working or that your illness is getting worse.*

## How to Manage Fatigue During Cancer Treatment

Fatigue means feeling tired, exhausted, weary or not having the energy to do your daily activities. Fatigue is a common side effect of chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy.

- Many people feel very tired or exhausted during their treatment.
- Having fatigue does not mean that your treatment is not working or that your illness is getting worse.

Here are some helpful tips to lessen fatigue and increase your energy level:

### **Keep Moving**

Exercise for 15 to 30 minutes, 3 to 5 days a week. Start out slowly and increase the pace over time.

Good exercises for fatigue are:

- Walking.
- Biking.
- Chair exercises.
- Light aerobic or water exercises.

### **Eat Well**

Your taste will change during your treatment. Try new foods and seasonings.

Be sure to:

- Drink lots of liquids, at least 8 glasses a day.
- Eat foods high in protein and calories, such as chicken, fish, lean meats, avocados and nuts.

Time savers

- Plan your menu in advance.
- Prepare detailed shopping lists.
- Prepare your meals when you are feeling well.
- Make extra food and freeze or refrigerate.

Increase your enjoyment

- Eat in a relaxed and pleasant place.
- Plan your day so you are not overly tired just before meals.

## **Rest**

### **Plan**

- Set a bedtime and a wake-up time.
- Avoid long naps or naps in the late afternoon.
- Do not eat heavy meals or drink a large amount of liquid before bedtime.
- Follow a relaxing bedtime routine. This will help to set aside problems or concerns before bedtime.

### **Setting the stage**

- Turn on a night light.
- Use your bed and bedroom for sleeping and sex only.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet and comfortable.

Do not lie awake in bed for a long period of time. If you cannot sleep, leave your bedroom and do something to help you relax until you fall asleep again.

### **Conserve Your Energy**

- Let other people help you.
- Plan short rest breaks into your work day.
- Spread household tasks throughout the week.
- Wear shirts with front buttons instead of pullovers.
- When cooking, prepare double portions and freeze.
- Wear comfortable clothes and low-heeled, slip-on shoes.
- Choose the tasks that are most important to you and perform them when you feel best.
- Whenever you can, sit down to do a task, such as cooking, bathing and drying off, washing dishes or ironing.

### **Call Your Doctor if:**

- You become confused.
- Your fatigue increases over time.
- You are too tired to get out of bed and this feeling lasts 24 hours or more.

### **Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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