

TIPS FOR MANAGING CANCER-RELATED FATIGUE (CRF)

What is cancer related fatigue and how is it different from normal fatigue?

Cancer related fatigue is different from the fatigue that you experienced before developing cancer. Persons undergoing cancer treatment may experience fatigue that is not relieved by rest. Fatigue may result from cancer treatments or from the disease itself; however, the cause is not fully understood. The fatigue will go away gradually after treatment is complete but there are some things you can do to help balance your fatigue and treatments.

Rest

- ✓ Plan your day so you have time to rest. Short naps or breaks are recommended so it does not interfere with your ability to sleep well at night.
- ✓ Keep a daily diary and note your energy levels, treatments received that day and other activities. This will help you identify times where you have more fatigue and may need to rest and other times that you may have more energy and can perform more important activities.

Diet and Exercise

- ✓ Regular moderate exercise has been shown in recent research to be effective and is recommended for most persons during and after cancer treatment for helping to manage CRF. Check with your doctor or therapist if exercise is appropriate for you.
- ✓ Exercise can help you sleep better and improve your mood.
- ✓ Drink plenty of water and eat a healthy diet. Avoid caffeine and alcoholic drinks.
- ✓ Don't stand too long.
- ✓ Avoid activity in extreme temperatures.

Schedule Activities

- ✓ Try to perform activities that require high-energy use at times of peak energy.
- ✓ Prioritize activities:
 - Consider doing the activities you enjoy but do them more easily or for less time.
 - Save your energy for the important things.
 - Prioritize your list of tasks into items that must be done, items that can be done later, and those that can be eliminated.
- ✓ Pace yourself to make sure you have the energy to do what needs to be done each day.
 - Do things slowly
 - Divide the task into smaller parts and take breaks after accomplishing each part.
- ✓ Delegate
 - Ask family and friends for help. (Don't forget to thank your helpers).
 - Make specific requests for what you need. People who offer to help really want to but they may not know what to do. You may want to choose one person (job coordinator) to help you coordinate help for routine chores.

Housekeeping

- ✓ Schedule household tasks throughout the week.
- ✓ Do house work sitting down when possible. Use long-handled dusters, dust mops, etc. Use a wheeled cart or carpenter's apron to carry supplies.
- ✓ Store items that you use often within easy reach
- ✓ Drag or slide objects rather than lifting. If you do need to lift an object, use your leg muscles rather than your back muscles.
- ✓ Sit when ironing and take rest periods.
- ✓ Stop working before becoming overly tired.

Shopping

- ✓ Organize list by aisle
Use a grocery cart for support or scooter.
- ✓ Shop at less busy times.
- ✓ Request assistance in unloading bags into car.
- ✓ Buy clothes that don't require ironing.

Child Care

- ✓ Plan play activities to allow for sitting down
- ✓ Teach children to climb up on the lap or into chair instead of being lifted.
- ✓ Delegate child care when possible.
- ✓ Make a game of household chores so that children will want to help.

Workplace

- ✓ Plan workload to take advantage of peak energy times.
- ✓ Arrange work environment for easy access to commonly used equipment and supplies.

Bathing

- ✓ Sit down to bathe and dry off.
- ✓ Wear a terry robe instead of drying off.
- ✓ Use a shower/bath organizer to decrease leaning and reaching.
- ✓ Install grab bars in the bathroom.
- ✓ Use extension handles on sponges and brushes.
- ✓ Use an elevated toilet seat.

Dressing

- ✓ Lay out clothes and toiletries before dressing.
- ✓ Minimize leaning over to put on clothes and shoes (i.e. bring your foot to your knee or prop your foot up on a foot stool to apply socks and shoes.)
- ✓ Fasten bra in front then turn to the back.
- ✓ Wear comfortable clothes and low-heeled, slip on shoes.
- ✓ Wear button front shirts rather than pullovers.

Meal Preparation

- ✓ Use convenience/easy-to-prepare foods
- ✓ Use small appliances (they take less effort to use)
- ✓ Arrange the preparation environment for easy access to frequently used items.
- ✓ Prepare meals sitting down.
- ✓ Soak dishes instead of scrubbing and let dishes air dry. Prepare double portions and freeze half.

Leisure

- ✓ Do activities with a companion.
- ✓ Select activities that match energy level.
- ✓ Balance activity and rest. Don't get overtired.

Contact your doctor if you feel too tired to get out of bed for a 24 hour period, if you feel confused, dizzy, lose your balance or fall, have problems waking up, have problems catching your breath, have difficulty sleeping or if fatigue seems to be getting worse.