

WHAT CAN HELP

Knowing the signs of fatigue helps. They are:

- Tired legs
- Tired eyes
- Lack of concentration
- Weakness
- Sleepiness
- Irritability
- Impatience
- Lack of energy



MISSION

A world free of cancer

VISION

To lead in transformative cancer care, research and education through courage, commitment and compassion

With 16 network sites, Karmanos delivers world-renowned care and access to clinical trials throughout Michigan and northern Ohio.

The National Cancer Institute recognizes Karmanos as one of the best cancer centers in the nation with a comprehensive cancer center designation.

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TREATING FATIGUE



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FATIGUE

Fatigue is a feeling of tiredness that does not go away by resting or a good night's sleep. Patients may have a total lack of energy or a decrease in their ability to complete tasks. Other signs of fatigue are having a hard time talking, walking, thinking and making decisions.

Some common reasons why cancer patients feel fatigue are:

- Side effects of many types of cancer treatments (chemotherapy, radiation therapy and biotherapy)
- Anemia (decreased red blood cells) reduces the amount of oxygen and nutrients in the body. That means that the body will have less energy.
- Changes in sleep patterns and daily routines related to a cancer diagnosis can contribute to fatigue. Sleep patterns may change as patients keep up with appointments and undergo medical exams and tests.
- Emotional stress of a cancer diagnosis, anxiety and depression can cause fatigue.
- Cytokines (produced by the immune system) might contribute to fatigue.
- Pain.
- Not eating enough or not eating the right foods.
- Constipation.



TREATING FATIGUE

- Keep a daily journal and write down activities, noting energy and fatigue levels. If a pattern appears then activities can be changed.
- Fatigue related to anemia may require blood transfusions or medications designed to increase red blood cell production.

NUTRITION

- Eat a balanced diet including plenty of green leafy vegetables and red meat.
- Eat more frequent, smaller meals or snacks throughout the day.
- Drink eight glasses of water a day to rid your body of treatment by-products that may cause fatigue.
- Get help with preparing food and with shopping.

ACTIVITIES

- Plan your day so that the activities that require the most energy can be done when you have the most energy.
- Limit activities to those that are most important to you.
- Plan a rest period before and after activities.
- Listen to music, read a book, meet friends, watch a movie, go for a walk or a car ride.
- Light exercise such as walking is an activity that most people can do at some point. It actually decreases fatigue.
- Keep an active mind and body by doing activities on a regular basis.

REST PATTERNS

- Do not feel that you must live up to your previous energy levels.
- Rest when feeling tired. Rest for short periods during the day. Take naps early in the day so they don't interfere with nighttime sleep.
- Accept help from friends and family members who want to help.
- Don't be afraid to ask others for help.
- Maintain a regular sleep schedule.

ACCEPTING HELP

- Put someone else in charge of organizing the job list, assigning jobs and supervising work.
- Let others do shopping, household chores, cooking and driving.
- Remember that you don't need to talk to, feed or entertain your helpers.
- Delay accepting social invitations. Say something like, "I'd like to go to the movies if I feel up to it on Saturday."
- Develop a system to keep track of who is responsible for taking care of your transportation, meals, appointments, medications, etc.

COMPLEMENTARY AND SUPPORTING SERVICES

The negative effects of stress can be eased in many ways – exercise, relaxation techniques, visual imagery, meditation, spiritual practices, talking with others and counseling. Many find support groups to be very helpful. Check with our Support Services office for groups that may help you.

Adapted from Fact Sheet on Cancer Related Fatigue from the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, 2022, www.lls.org.