



LIVEWELL CANCER SURVIVORSHIP PROGRAM

Cancer-Related Fatigue

What is it?

Cancer-related fatigue (fa-teeg) is a physical, emotional, and/or mental feeling of being very tired, which is not relieved by rest and causes you to restrict activities. This fatigue often occurs along with other symptoms, such as pain, anxiety, depression, and sleep problems.

Cancer-related fatigue is a normal effect of cancer and its treatment and should not be seen as a sign of your cancer coming back. Fatigue may last for months, or even years after your treatments, but most patients have a decrease in fatigue and can return to normal activities.

What YOU can do

Cancer-related fatigue is felt by many cancer patients, so you are not alone. There are steps you can take to lessen the fatigue you may be feeling so you can resume your daily living.

- Keep a journal and take note of how you feel throughout the day so you can track your fatigue to plan ahead
- Cancer-related fatigue is perceived in many ways – learn the symptoms unique to YOU and YOUR fatigue
- Sleep problems are very common for people who have cancer-related fatigue:
 - Limit daytime naps to less than one hour
 - Give yourself time to relax before going to sleep
 - Set a bedtime and wake-up schedule to “reset” your body’s clock
 - Aim to sleep to 8 hours every night
 - If you wake up during the night, keep your room dark and quiet (do not turn on the TV or use electronic devices)
 - Limit your caffeine intake and avoid caffeine in the evenings
- An increase in your activity level and fitting exercise into your daily routine are proven methods to reduce cancer-related fatigue
 - Do moderate level exercise, daily or every other day, as you are able
 - Slowly start an exercise routine to allow your body time to adjust to your new program
 - Walking, jogging, cycling, swimming and yoga are all good forms of exercise
- Ask for help from your family and friends when you are trying to complete tasks you find tiring or are not able to complete without help (e.g. housework, yard work, cooking, and errands)
- Make note of the most important tasks of your day

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What YOU can do, continued

- Manage your stress and anxiety levels to reduce the amount of fatigue you are feeling
 - Ask others for help when you feel stressed or have problems finishing tasks
 - Practice exercises to relax such as yoga, tai chi, and meditation
- Eat a balanced diet
 - Consume enough calories of the right food
 - Eat plenty of protein to help repair damaged muscle and tissue
 - Good protein choices are lean meats, fish, cheese and milk
 - Some vegetarian options for protein include soy milk, beans, tofu, quinoa and Greek yogurt
- Be sure to eat fruits and/or vegetables at every meal
- Drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration

What your doctor may recommend

- Sleep studies to check for sleep apnea or other sleeping problems
- Consultation with a dietician
- Blood testing to see if there are any issues that may be causing you to be fatigued, such as anemia (low red blood cell count)
- Consultation with a psychologist to help relieve any stress, anxiety, or depression you may be feeling
 - The Department of Psycho-Oncology at UPMC CancerCenter can be reached at 412-623-5888 or www.upmccancercenter.com/behavmed
- Medications to treat other causes of fatigue such as pain

Resources

The development of this document was partially supported by Susan G. Komen for the Cure® Pittsburgh. For more information about the LiveWell Survivorship Program:

Hillman Cancer Center
412-692-4724

UPMCCancerCenter.com/livewell

Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC
412-641-4530 ext. 1

UPMC.com/MageeLiveWell

UPMC Passavant
412-748-5762

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