

Managing Fatigue

Fatigue is the most common side effect of breast cancer treatment, and it is estimated that about 9 out of 10 people may experience this. Symptoms of fatigue include lack of energy, sleeping more than usual, feeling unable to do normal activities, putting less into appearance or self-care, feeling tired after sleeping, having difficulty concentrating, and having trouble finding words. Complementary approaches that have been found effective in reducing fatigue include: massage, acupuncture, meditation, reiki, tai chi, and yoga.

Tips for Managing Fatigue:

- Exercise is an excellent treatment for fatigue, with plenty of research to support this. It's recommended that you get a minimum of four hours per week of physical activity, but when you're fatigued, set a goal of about 15 minutes of walking per day, and then gradually increase this time, as able. Other types of gentle exercise include yoga or tai chi.
- Eating too many refined carbohydrates such as white breads, pasta, white rice and sugary desserts may sound particularly appetizing when you're fatigued, but these foods will only increase feelings of lethargy.
- Eat a diet that is rich in vegetables and contains adequate amounts of fruit, legumes, fish, nuts, seeds and oils.
- Fatigue may occasionally be related to certain vitamin or mineral deficiencies. Ask your doctor if you should be tested for any of these, or speak with your nutritionist about which foods contain these nutrients.
- Stay away from alcohol, coffee, caffeine, and nicotine in the evening to avoid disrupting sleep patterns.
- When you have the energy to cook, make a large batch of something, and freeze the excess in small containers. When you are too tired to cook, you can quickly heat up one of these.
- Keep a consistent schedule by going to bed at the same time each night and waking up at the same time each day, giving yourself about 8 hours of sleep in between. Early morning exercise may help to solidify your routine and provide additional energy, while strenuous exercise in the evening may keep you from falling asleep at night. Also, limit naps to 30 minutes to avoid grogginess.
- While you may not be able to keep up with your usual routine, be kind to yourself, and allow yourself to rest and recover adequately.
- Foods that you tend to have on hand, are easy to cook, and are low in refined carbohydrates are the perfect solution to eating while fatigued. Try this "eggs with spinach" recipe for breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
 - **Eggs with Spinach**
Sauté 2-3 cups of fresh baby spinach in 2 teaspoons of olive oil with a dash of salt, pepper and red chili flakes. Use as a bed for 2 poached or scrambled eggs. Alternatively, scramble the spinach with the eggs, make into an omelet, or scramble/poach the eggs and place over a bed of raw spinach, lightly dressed with olive oil and balsamic vinegar.