



**Mount
Sinai**

Feeling Too Tired: Cancer and Fatigue

Nearly all people who are treated for cancer report feeling at times too tired to do the things they need or want to do. Cancer-related fatigue is a feeling of tiredness that may have little to do with your physical activity or amount of sleep. Feeling too tired does not mean that the cancer is getting worse or that the treatment is not working. In fact, part of your fatigue may be due to your body and the treatment working together to destroy the cancer. There are many different causes of fatigue during treatment and even after treatment ends. *Understanding the cause of your fatigue will help you and your health care team to develop a plan to help you manage the fatigue as best as you can.*

It is important to note that anxiety and depression can also contribute to your feeling tired. Worry, fear and emotional stress can contribute to fatigue and in turn, fatigue can affect your physical, mental, social and even financial well-being. Reducing your distress and worry can help you to feel more energetic. The reality is that you will have good days and not-so-good days. This is a normal part of cancer recovery. Allow yourself to rest during the times you are most tired. And be active when you feel up to it. There is no right or wrong way – do what works best for you.

Other causes of fatigue can include things like chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, low blood counts, pain, changes in nutrition, medications and anemia. There are many causes of fatigue and understanding which of these is causing *your* fatigue will help you and your health care team make a plan to help you better manage the fatigue. You might also want to involve your friends and family in the plan as you will want to save your energy for the things that matter most to you.

If you have cancer-related fatigue and are continuing to work either during treatment or returning to work after treatment ends, you may be able to ask your employer for changes that may make working easier for you. You do not need to tell your employer that you have cancer but you will have to let them know that you have a medical condition. Visit *Cancer and Careers*® (www.cancerandcareers.org) to find out more information about your rights as an employee with cancer and tips on how to talk with your employer about your situation.

Remember that it is very common to feel too tired to do the things you need and want to do during and after cancer treatment. Generally, fatigue comes on gradually as cancer treatment goes on over time. And it may take time (possibly several weeks or months) after treatment ends, for you to feel back to normal. Good communication with your health care team will make it more likely that you can figure out the cause(s) of your fatigue and to work on meaningful solutions.

Please discuss your fatigue with your health care team.

Be kind to yourself. Know that you are going through a challenging time and that your mind, body and spirit are working hard through the cancer experience to find health and wellness. Time may be the best solution for treatment-related fatigue. Once treatment ends, you should be able to return to your usual activity level especially if you work with your health care provider to stay on top of this concern.

This information is provided as an educational service.

It is not meant to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor.