

What causes fatigue?

Fatigue is different for every person. Here are some causes of fatigue:

- Chemotherapy
- Pain
- Sleep problems
- Radiation
- Certain medicines
- Lack of exercise
- Surgery
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not being able to get out of bed
- Nausea
- Eating problems
- Feeling anxious
- Vomiting
- Infection
- Being depressed
- Symptoms from treatment
- Low blood counts (anemia)
- Emotional demands of cancer

Sometimes it is hard to know just what causes the fatigue. It is a common side effect of most cancer treatments. It can even be caused by the cancer itself. It can be very hard to treat because other things can add to the fatigue, such as feeling sad, depressed, or anxious about your illness. Only you know if you have fatigue and how bad it is. No lab tests or x-rays can show your level of fatigue. The best measure of fatigue comes from your own report to your health care team.

What are clues you have fatigue?

- Feeling like you have no energy
- Sleeping more
- Having no desire to do the things you normally do

- Feeling tired even after sleeping
- Being unable to focus or think clearly
- Feeling sad, negative, or irritable

How can you cope with your fatigue?

- Tell your doctor or nurse about your fatigue. Let them know how bad it is. Your doctor will want to look for the cause of the fatigue. Once this is known, you can talk about treatments.
- Plan your day so that you have time to rest. A few shorter rest periods may be better than 1 long rest period. Naps can be helpful as long as they do not cause you to have trouble falling asleep at night.
- Do the most important things when you have the most energy. Expect that less important things may not get done.
- Ask for help from loved ones and friends.
- Place things that you use often within easy reach.
- Learn ways to deal with your stress. Try deep-breathing exercises, reading, playing music, or other things that you like to do.
- Talk to your doctor and get help with any pain, nausea, or depression you may have.
- Be active if you can. Ask your doctor about the best type of exercise for you.
- Keep a record of how you feel each day. Take it with you when you see your doctor.
- Eat a healthy diet that includes nuts and seeds, soya products, and dairy products like milk, cheese, and yogurt. Drink plenty of fluids.
- Ask your doctor if you should follow a special diet or take vitamins.

Call your doctor if:

- Your fatigue does not get better, keeps coming back, or gets worse.
- You are more tired than usual during or after doing things.
- You are feeling tired and it is not because of something you've done.
- Your fatigue disrupts your social life or daily routines.
- Your fatigue does not get better if you rest or sleep.
- You get confused or cannot focus your thoughts.
- You feel out of breath or your heart is racing after just a little activity.
- You cannot get out of bed for more than 24 hours.