



Living with tiredness (fatigue)

This information is intended as a guide to help you live with tiredness (fatigue). It is not intended to replace medical advice. Let your doctor or nurse know if you have symptoms of fatigue that you are not able to cope with. Listed below are things that you can do that may help.

1. Rest (but not too much)

Plan your day so you have time to rest.

Take short naps or breaks (30 minutes or less), rather than one long rest period.

Sleep and rest are important but don't overdo it. Too much rest can decrease your energy level.

2. Stay active

Stay as active as you can. Regular moderate exercise such as walking can help fatigue. Add other activities that are less active such as reading or listening to music.

Try to still do the things you enjoy, but shorten the time you spend or spread them across the week.

3. Save your energy

Tips to help you do this include:

- Planning ahead. Keeping a diary can help you to do this.
- Spread your activities across the day.
- Take rest breaks between activities to save your energy for the things you want to do. Decide which activities are really important to you and which are not.
- Don't do activities for long periods of time or in hot or cold temperatures.
- Store items within easy reach, so you won't have to strain to get them.

Remember that:

- Long, hot showers or baths can also drain your energy.

4. Get help with activities and chores

Don't force yourself to do more than you can manage. It may be necessary to explain to family and friends that the fatigue you feel is different from "normal" tiredness to help them understand.

- Ask your family or friends to help with the activities you find tiring.
- You may want to organize friends and family to do some tasks regularly for you.

5. Eat well

It is important to:

- Drink plenty of water and juices.
- Try to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat a healthy diet which includes protein and calories, this will help your body heal.

6. Try and have good sleep habits

These tips may help you to improve the quality of your sleep.

- Develop a relaxing routine before bed such as having a bath/shower, listening to calming music, or reading a book.
- Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time each morning.
- If you can't sleep, don't lie there worrying, get up and do something outside the bedroom such as reading, and then go back to bed when you feel more tired.
- Make sure your bedroom is dark, quiet, and not too warm.

7. Stress Management

Stress, tension, and anxiety can make the feelings of fatigue worse. By finding ways to reduce stress you can help reduce feelings of fatigue.

Learning simple relaxation techniques can help. For more information about this you may want to try a relaxation class at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Tel 01923 844014 for details or ask for LJMC leaflet: PI 39 Relaxation and Breathing Techniques.

8. Get Support

You may want to join a support group. This can allow you to share your feelings with others which can ease the burden of fatigue. At these sessions you can learn about others' experiences, this may give you hints and ideas to help you. For more information about support groups ask for LJMC leaflet HHC 243 Local Cancer Support Groups.

You may want to try a complementary therapy such as aromatherapy or reflexology. For information about complementary therapy sessions available at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre ask for leaflet PI 16 Complementary Therapies.

You may also want to try counselling. Sessions are available at the Lynda Jackson Macmillan Centre. For more information ask for LJMC leaflet PI 46 Counselling or telephone 01923 844014.

9. Talk to your nurse or doctor

Your nurse or doctor can help with advice and support.

It may be useful to keep a record of how you feel, this may help you to answer their questions.

- They may ask you to describe your fatigue by scoring how bad it is (rating it between 0 to 10).
- They may ask if there are any patterns to when you feel fatigued, or if there is anything that makes it better or worse.

You should tell your doctor or nurse if you experience any of the following:

- feeling too tired to get out of bed for a 24-hour period
- if you feel confused, dizzy, lose your balance or fall
- if you have a problem waking up
- if you have problems catching your breath
- if the fatigue seems to be getting worse.