

Empower - Menopause and Cancer Survivorship Pathway

Managing Fatigue

Tips and Advice

Nutrition

1. Make sure to eat plenty of food. If eating is difficult, try to consume high calorie drinks. One way to ensure you are eating enough throughout the day is to carry healthy snacks with you when you leave the house.

(<https://www.cancer.gov/rare-brain-spine-tumor/living/symptoms/fatigue>)

2. Keep a food-tracker to see if certain foods increase your fatigue.

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3. Drink plenty of clear fluids like water and juice.

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Day to Day Tasks

1. Plan ahead: plan your day in advance so you have the energy to do things you want to do most.
2. While grocery shopping, make a list beforehand so you do not have to expend energy thinking about what you need.
3. Try to spread household tasks out over the week; do not attempt to do too much in one day.
4. If possible, ask for help for completing daily tasks around the house such as cleaning and taking out the rubbish.
5. To help plan daily tasks, keep a fatigue tracker to see if there are certain days or times of day when you have more energy.

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Work

1. Discuss your fatigue with your employer to see if you can work a more flexible schedule or work from home if possible.
2. Try to take short breaks throughout the day.

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Physical Activity

1. Try to engage in some sort of physical activity 3-5 days per week.
2. Moderate activity is defined as increased heartrate but not being so out of breath that you cannot talk. Yoga and walks are some simple ways to engage in moderate physical activity.

Childcare

1. Plan activities with your children that can be done sitting down (like drawing or reading books).
2. Explain to them that you are experiencing fatigue.
3. Assign them small jobs around the house.

Improving Sleep

4. Keep your mind occupied before sleep through activities like reading or puzzles.
5. Take short naps. Try to avoid naps that are longer than an hour, so your sleep is not impacted at night.
6. Eliminate noise with things like earplugs or by turning on an electric fan.
7. Relax before bed. This can be done through things like reading or listening to relaxing music.
8. Avoid alcohol and caffeine in the evenings as they can interfere with sleep.

Miscellaneous

1. Avoid smoking.
2. Talk to your GP, specialist doctor or nurse about fatigue symptoms about your symptoms and how long you have been experiencing fatigue.

<https://www.cancer.org.au/cancer-information/cancer-side-effects/fatigue>

3. Try complementary therapies like meditation and yoga.

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Stress Management

Stress can make fatigue worse. Here are tips to manage stress:

1. Talk to people about anything that may be causing you stress.
2. Avoid reading up on your condition as doing so can cause stress and anxiety. There are a lot of unreliable, non-medical sources with incorrect information.
3. Try this relaxation exercise: (this exercise is copied word for word by the Irish cancer society)
 - a. Before you begin this technique, create a peaceful space. Find a quiet comfortable room, turn off your phone and make sure that you will not be disturbed for 10 or 15 minutes. Turn on some relaxing music, light a candle and burn your favourite scented oil if you wish. You might also want to dim the lights.
 - b. Sit or lie on a comfortable well-supported chair, couch or bed.
 - c. Close your eyes if you wish.
 - Take deep breaths – in through your nose and out through your mouth.
 - Place your hands over your stomach. When you breathe in, your stomach should rise, pushing your hands up. This is called abdominal breathing.

- Practise breathing like this a few times. Then, starting with the muscles in your feet and working upwards, tense (squeeze) each muscle group for 10 seconds. Then let it go so that it feels relaxed and heavy.
- Work your way up through your body including your back, shoulders, neck and forehead. Finish with your arms and hands. If a part of your body is injured, leave it out.
- When your whole body feels relaxed, return to focusing on your breathing.
- Lie for a few minutes in relaxation and stillness.
- When you are ready to finish, slowly open your eyes, wiggle your toes and stretch a little.
- Allow yourself to become aware of your surroundings.