National Cancer Institute

Fatigue

(Feeling weak and very tired)

"I was so tired. It was hard to do even simple things. My nurse said to stay as active as I could. I found that taking short walks each morning gave me more energy during the day."

Why do I feel so tired?

Chemotherapy can make you tired. So can other things like anemia, which is a low red blood cell count. Being depressed or in pain, taking certain medicines, or having trouble sleeping can also make you feel tired.

Make a plan to feel less tired.

Do less. Let others help you.

- Do activities that are most important first.
- Ask others for help.
- Take time off from your job, or work fewer hours.

Tell your doctor or nurse if:

- **You are not able to do your normal activities**
- **You are still very tired, even after resting or sleeping**

Many people find it helpful to keep track of their energy level. Some people write down how they are feeling each day in a notebook to share with their doctor. Others use their smart phone or a computer. Tracking can help you and your doctor figure out how to manage or treat your fatigue.

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Eat and drink well.

- Make healthy foods when you feel well. Freeze them to eat later.
- Eating helps you keep up your strength. Some people find it easier to eat 5 or 6 small meals or healthy snacks instead of 3 big meals.
- Most people need to drink at least 8 cups of water a day. Keep water with you and take small sips during the day.

Be as active as you can.

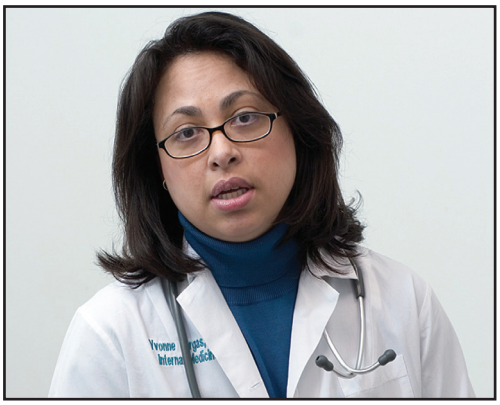
- Try to exercise every day. Even 15 to 30 minutes a day can help give you energy.
- Take a walk or ride an exercise bike.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about other exercises that can help. Stretching, yoga, or Tai Chi help some people.

Take time to rest.

- Listen to your body. Rest when you feel tired.
- Try to take short naps that are 1 hour or less, during the day.
- Make a bedtime routine. Bathing or listening to music before you go to sleep may help you relax.
- Sleep at least 8 hours every night.

Questions to ask your doctor or nurse:

1. What problems should I call you about?
2. What medicine or treatments can help me?
3. What foods and drinks are best for me?
4. How much liquid should I drink each day?
5. What exercises can help me feel better?
6. How should I track my energy level? What should I write down and share with you?



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Revised February 2012

How can we help?

National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service

Phone: 1-800-422-6237 (1-800-4-CANCER)
Web: www.cancer.gov
Online Chat: www.cancer.gov/livehelp

NCI has a series of 18 Chemotherapy Side Effects Sheets at:
www.cancer.gov/chemo-side-effects

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