

Fatigue and Lack of Energy

Feelings of fatigue begin at the onset of therapy and can become persistent, gradually increasing in severity over time. Your doctor may assess the severity of your fatigue by using an inventory scale to check your symptoms. Believe it or not, if you are tired and suffering from fatigue, exercise is one of the best things you can do to help yourself feel better. Find a balance between taking it slowly and keeping active. Consult with your doctor about an exercise program that is right for you.

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What You Can Do

- > Napping and resting are best. Take short naps during the day and nap before a planned activity. A 30- to 40-minute nap in the daytime can help restore energy, but don't nap too late in the day. Set an alarm so that you do not sleep too long; napping too long can interfere with nighttime sleep.
- > Get a full night's sleep every night. Tell your doctor if you are having trouble sleeping (insomnia).
- > Maintain a regular schedule. Get up at the same time every day, if possible, and go to bed at about the same time every night.
- > Conserve energy and pace yourself. But don't cut out activities that make you feel better or are part of your usual routine.
- > Set priorities, doing only those activities which are most important.
- > Try to postpone social activities that make you tired or "exhausted."
- > Maintain a diary to identify fatigue patterns.

Ask for Help and Get It

- > Ask your family to do tasks that make you tired or are stressful. An obvious request may include, for example, helping with household chores; another might be driving you to work.
- > Identify psychological and social stressors that contribute to fatigue. Ask someone to help you with carpooling or holiday meals and planning. Eliminate those things that can be overwhelming.
- > You might not have the energy to cook or go shopping. Ask someone to help you prepare meals so you can still eat nutritiously.

Positive Steps to Promote Energy

- > Maintain adequate hydration and nutrition.
- > Visit or call friends, read, listen to music, watch a movie, or do a hobby you enjoy for 30 minutes, 3 times weekly.
- > If you know an activity will make you laugh, smile, and feel better, add it to or keep it in your daily or weekly schedule.

This information is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice. Consult your health care provider for individualized information about your therapy. Your health care provider should be your primary source of information about your medical condition and treatment.

Rule Out Other Causes

- > Consult your doctor to see if you are fatigued due to dehydration, anemia, depression, poor sleep patterns, stress, change in thyroid function, or nutritional factors including weight loss or gain.
- > Fatigue is a common, normal side effect of therapy. You should not worry that if you get more tired it means your disease is getting worse.
- > More sleep can increase your fatigue. Even if you're feeling fatigued, you need to get up and get moving.

Exercise—Get Your Body Moving

The last advice you may want to hear is to "exercise." But exercise is very important to keep yourself fit and may help with the effects of therapy. Ask your doctor about whether or not you can exercise, what you can do, and how much.

- > If you did exercise before you started therapy, keep it up, only take it slowly. If you preferred jogging, you can jog; just cut down if you need to on the time or distance, or walk instead.
- > If you were never one for exercise, then start by walking. This is one of the best exercises for the entire body, and it can be an enjoyable and social experience.
- > Try stretching slowly, or doing yoga or isometrics. Subtle forms of exercise will accomplish much for your aching joints and muscles.
- > Swimming is very helpful. Go slowly—just 15 minutes is fine. If possible, join the Y or a sports club.
- > If you are enrolled in a fitness class, don't worry about what the person nearby or the fitness instructor can do. Work at your own pace.
- > Join a dance club, do low-impact aerobics, find a friend or ask your partner to stretch, walk, or bike ride with you—you really can do it.