

Fatigue

Fatigue is an overwhelming sense of exhaustion and/or decreased ability for physical and mental work, regardless of enough sleep.

Signs and symptoms

- Difficulty maintaining usual routines: showering, cooking, and/ or walking up stairs
- Difficulty concentrating
- Decreased sexual drive
- Feeling moody or irritable
- Tiredness or having less energy, even after resting
- Trouble sleeping
- Accident-prone
- Disinterest in surroundings
- Weakness

Things to do

- Be active! Walk or exercise on a regular basis; start off slow and gradually increase time and intensity
- Include brief rest periods in between daily activities
- Plan activities so that you do the most important things when your energy level is at its highest point
- Use relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, to minimize stress
- Start a normal sleep routine; go to bed at the same time each night and awake at the same time each morning
- Eat a balanced diet, perhaps six small meals or snacks in between meals
- Create a comfortable environment
- Maintain social activities and those activities that bring you joy
- Ask others for help at home
- Read or listen to books on tape
- Take a break from working and rest as needed

Things to avoid

- Being inactive
- Spending too much time in bed

Call your healthcare team if you are having difficulty sleeping, depression, pain, hot flashes, shortness of breath, or lack of interest in activities that used to be pleasurable to you.

Tips for Conserving Your Energy

Saving energy during regular daily activity helps decrease fatigue. The way you stand, walk, and move your body can affect your energy. The following information will provide you with helpful tips and suggestions of things you can do to help save energy and decrease fatigue.

Plan and Organize

Develop a plan for your daily and weekly activities. Alternate between tasks that take a lot of energy with those that take less. Arrange your household so that most activities can be done on one level of the house. Organize ahead of time so you do not have to rush.

Delegate

Assign tasks and chores to others as much as possible. This helps you save energy and allows others to feel helpful.

Pace

Pace activities to allow for rest periods. Stop to rest before you get tired, even if it means stopping in the middle of a task. Try to avoid spurts of activity; this can drain energy. Pace activities on good days as well as bad days. Develop a routine to prevent overdoing.

Position

Sit to do activities whenever possible. Use assistive devices to help you maintain good posture while walking or moving about. Examples of assistive devices are walkers, scooters, canes, handrails, crutches, and grab bars. These devices can help you save energy by allowing you to do things without having to bend or reach.

Avoid heavy lifting (children, pots and pans, laundry). Use carts or wagons to move things from room to room. Wear a fanny pack, carpenter's belt, or a jacket or sweater with pockets to carry things.

Prioritize

Decide what needs to be done and make a list. Place more important items on the top of the list, and less important items at the bottom.

Eliminate

Ask yourself if the task is really needed or if it can be eliminated. For example, eliminate ironing and/or washing by taking the clothes to the cleaners instead.

Modify

Ask yourself if the task could be done differently, more simply, or with less energy. Is it possible to cook a meal using prepared foods rather than starting from scratch? Could you use cookware that can be used to serve and store the food?

Activities to Preserve Energy

Basic Activities

- Dressing
 - Wear loose-fitting clothes that are easier to get on and off
 - Bring your foot to your knee to put on socks and shoes so you won't have to lean over
 - Wear slip-on shoes or shoes that have Velcro[®] or elastic shoelaces
 - Use a long-handled shoehorn or sock aid
 - For women, fasten bra in front and then turn it to back
 - Wear clothes that button in front rather than pullovers or clothes with back buttons
 - Use a reacher or dressing stick to help with zippers in back
- Bathing and Grooming
 - Wash your hair in the shower rather than over the sink
 - Use a terrycloth robe instead of towels to dry off
 - Use organizers to keep items within reach
 - Use a chair in the shower or tub
 - Use a long-handled sponge or brush to reach your back and feet
 - Rest your elbows on a dressing table to avoid leaning unsupported
 - Use long-handled brushes or combs to avoid holding arms overhead
 - Use liquid soap or soap on a rope
 - Use an elevated toilet seat
- Miscellaneous
 - Install and use ramps
 - Use a lift chair
 - Place chairs throughout your home to allow for rest stops

Advanced Activities

- Housework
 - Spread tasks out over the week or month
 - Hire help or ask willing friends and family for help
 - Use long-handled dusters, mops, and dustpans
 - Use an automatic washer and dryer if possible
 - Use a lightweight iron
- Shopping
 - Make a list
 - Organize list by store aisle
 - Request store assistance
 - Have groceries delivered if possible
 - Shop at less busy times
 - Don't use "self-checkout"
 - Don't bag yourself
- Meal Preparation and Clean-Up
 - Gather all ingredients before starting
 - Use mixes or pre-packaged foods
 - Use cookware you can serve from
 - Use small, lightweight appliances
 - Use labor-saving devices such as electric mixers, blenders, or food processors

- Buy utensils that fit comfortably in the hand
- Store frequently used items at chest level so you won't have to bend or reach
- Line ovens and drip pans with foil for easy cleanup
- Let dishes soak rather than scrubbing them
- Let dishes air-dry
- When the thought of cooking or eating meals makes you tired:
 - Let others help prepare or bring food. Family and friends usually like to help!
 - Ask your healthcare team about community resources that deliver prepared meals
 - Use canned, frozen, or other prepared foods, or try ordering out
 - Cook extra food and freeze it in small containers on days when you feel well
 - Heat frozen food on days when you are too tired
 - Eat small, frequent meals rather than several large meals each day
 - Choose foods that are easy to chew including puddings and nutritional supplements
 - Have snack foods readily available
 - If you are really tired, put some favorite foods and beverages in a cooler with ice next to you so you can eat and drink while resting

- Childcare
 - Plan activities or outings at a place that will allow sitting or lying down
 - Take advantage of day care programs
 - Teach children to make a game of household chores
 - Consider allowing friends and family to take care of children on days you are tired

- Work
 - Plan your work around the best times of the day
 - Organize work centers so equipment is within easy reach
 - Create shortcuts
 - Take rest breaks
 - Work partial days if possible

- Leisure
 - Plan activities that allow you to sit or lie down
 - Plan social events at your peak energy time
 - Get out of the house on good days

If you are in need of immediate assistance, please call 732-235-2465 and select the option that best meets your needs.

General Exercise Guidelines for Cancer Survivors



This handout provides cancer survivors with general guidelines for physical activity during and after cancer treatment.
© 2011 C.M. Jankowski & E.E. Matthews

Why should I exercise? Exercise may help you to

- feel better
- lift your mood and ease some worries
- sleep better
- return to enjoying everyday activities and interests sooner
- improve your physical health
- tolerate cancer treatments better
- improve overall quality of life

Is it safe?

YES! Yes!

Studies show that moderate exercise (exercise that raises your heart rate, makes you break a sweat, but not so hard that you cannot talk) is generally safe for people with cancer. *Start slow but try to go!*

How should I exercise?

Try a step-by-step approach. Think about the activities you like to do and that fit into your day.

Step 1: Pick an exercise

- Ask yourself, what kind of exercise do I enjoy, or would be willing to do?
- What kind of exercise fits into my day?

For example: "I like to walk and could do that around my neighborhood in the evening."

Step 2: Set a short-term goal

"This week, I will walk for 10 minutes on 3 days."

Step 3: Set a long-term goal

"Six months from now, I want to be able to take a brisk walk for 20 min, 5 days of the week."



TIP: Consider using a pedometer to count your steps and write your daily step count on a calendar.

What if I don't feel like I can exercise on some days?

That's OK!

- ✓ Adjust your daily exercise routine
- ✓ Stay as physically active as you can
- ✓ Return to your short-term goal as soon as you are able
- ✓ Stay focused on your long-term goal

"I have chemotherapy on Monday, so I will walk for 10 min on Sunday, rest for 3 days, and try my walk again on Thursday. I will try to walk 3 times the following week".

"I know I'm going to have good and not-so-good days during treatment but I'll do what I can to reach my six-month goal."

TIP: If you have symptoms that concern you, consult with your health care provider.



What's a good long-term exercise goal?

The basic exercise recommendations for all adults in the U.S. include doing one of these:

- At least 150 minutes of reasonable aerobic activity/week *and* muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days/week, **or**
- 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity a week *and* muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days/week

TIP: You can add up exercise time in short periods throughout the day. Walking for 10 minutes morning, noon, and evening equals 30 min of walking.



For more information, see the Centers for Disease Control website
www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity

Physical Activity Log Sheet (make additional copies):

Name:

My physical activity goal is:

Tracking your weekly physical activity

- Steps: the number of steps taken if using a pedometer (step counter)
- Physical activity: record activity and time spent moving the body for at least 10 minutes at a time
- Intensity: on a scale of 1 to 10 below, how hard did you feel you were exercising?
- Before exercise: how did I feel before exercising today?
- After exercise: how did I feel after exercising today?

DATE	Steps	Physical activity & time (min)	Intensity	Before Exercise	After Exercise
1-Jun	2000	walked 5 min in AM and PM	4-5	sluggish in AM, better in PM	better in AM, the same in PM

Did you meet your goal(s)? Yes, I met my goal(s) this week. Not yet. I'm still working towards my goal(s).

Is it time to change my physical activity goal(s)?
 Not yet; keep this plan and goal(s) for another week
 Yes, I am ready to change my goal(s)

My new physical activity goal(s)

Exercise Intensity Scale

How Do I Feel?										
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
rest		easy		somewhat easy		somewhat hard		hard		extremely hard
		light intensity			moderate intensity			high intensity		
walking pace:		stroll			brisk			power walk/run		