

## Questions to ask your doctor:

- Why do I feel so tired?
- Is the cancer or my cancer treatment making me feel this tired?
- Are there any treatments to help my fatigue?
- What are my blood counts? Are they low? Can this be treated?
- Are there foods that I should eat to build up my blood?

Though fatigue can be tough to deal with, it can be managed. If you need help with fatigue or have questions about your cancer, please visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

# Fatigue

Fatigue is a feeling of being very tired physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is very common in people getting cancer treatment. This is not the same as being tired at the end of the day. It may not get better with rest or sleep. It can last for months after treatment ends. Fatigue is hard to describe. People talk about it in many ways. They may say they are tired, weak, exhausted, weary, worn out, heavy, or slow. Fatigue may start slowly or appear quickly. It can feel overwhelming



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Fatigue can affect many parts of your life, such as your ability to eat, how you feel about yourself, and how well you can take care of yourself. It can make it hard to focus. It may cause problems with how you relate to others. It is no wonder that more than 3 out of 4 people having cancer treatment say that fatigue is more stressful than nausea, vomiting, or pain. Fatigue is often the main reason some people stop treatment. It should not be ignored.

Knowing ahead of time that fatigue is a common part of living with cancer can help you deal with it. You can also make plans ahead of time in case you start feeling more tired than usual.

India Cancer Initiative



[cancer.org](http://cancer.org)



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## What causes fatigue?

Fatigue is different for every person. Here are some causes of fatigue:

- Chemotherapy
- Pain
- Sleep problems
- Radiation
- Certain medicines
- Lack of exercise
- Surgery
- Not drinking enough fluids
- Not being able to get out of bed
- Nausea
- Eating problems
- Feeling anxious
- Vomiting
- Infection
- Being depressed
- Symptoms from treatment
- Low blood counts (anemia)
- Emotional demands of cancer

Sometimes it is hard to know just what causes the fatigue. It is a common side effect of most cancer treatments. It can even be caused by the cancer itself. It can be very hard to treat because other things can add to the fatigue, such as feeling sad, depressed, or anxious about your illness. Only you know if you have fatigue and how bad it is. No lab tests or x-rays can show your level of fatigue. The best measure of fatigue comes from your own report to your health care team.

## What are clues you have fatigue?

- Feeling like you have no energy
- Sleeping more
- Having no desire to do the things you normally do

- Feeling tired even after sleeping
- Being unable to focus or think clearly
- Feeling sad, negative, or irritable

## How can you cope with your fatigue?

- Tell your doctor or nurse about your fatigue. Let them know how bad it is. Your doctor will want to look for the cause of the fatigue. Once this is known, you can talk about treatments.
- Plan your day so that you have time to rest. A few shorter rest periods may be better than 1 long rest period. Naps can be helpful as long as they do not cause you to have trouble falling asleep at night.
- Do the most important things when you have the most energy. Expect that less important things may not get done.
- Ask for help from loved ones and friends.
- Place things that you use often within easy reach.
- Learn ways to deal with your stress. Try deep-breathing exercises, reading, playing music, or other things that you like to do.
- Talk to your doctor and get help with any pain, nausea, or depression you may have.
- Be active if you can. Ask your doctor about the best type of exercise for you.
- Keep a record of how you feel each day. Take it with you when you see your doctor.
- Eat a healthy diet that includes nuts and seeds, soya products, and dairy products like milk, cheese, and yogurt. Drink plenty of fluids.
- Ask your doctor if you should follow a special diet or take vitamins.

## Call your doctor if:

- Your fatigue does not get better, keeps coming back, or gets worse.
- You are more tired than usual during or after doing things.
- You are feeling tired and it is not because of something you've done.
- Your fatigue disrupts your social life or daily routines.
- Your fatigue does not get better if you rest or sleep.
- You get confused or cannot focus your thoughts.
- You feel out of breath or your heart is racing after just a little activity.
- You cannot get out of bed for more than 24 hours.