

Tired, exhausted or fatigued

[Fatigue](#) is a very common problem for people with cancer. It may be caused by the cancer itself or its symptoms. It can also be a side effect of treatment.

Cancer-related fatigue is different from the tiredness someone without cancer may get. People with cancer may get tired more quickly, after less activity. Their fatigue may not be helped by rest or sleep. For most people, fatigue gets better after treatment finishes. But for some, it may continue for months or sometimes years.

Some of the effects of fatigue include:

- difficulty doing simple things, such as brushing your hair or getting dressed
- feeling you have no energy or strength
- difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- feeling breathless after light activity, or feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- feeling low in mood and more emotional than usual.

It is important to tell your doctors and nurses about your fatigue and how it makes you feel. Be honest and do not say you feel fine if that is not how you feel. There may be things they can do to help.

There are also things you can do for yourself that may help you cope.

Tips for managing tiredness and fatigue

- Try to plan bigger tasks to fit in with the time of day when you feel least tired.
- Pace yourself and plan enough rest and sleep periods. Plan a rest after activities. Some people also find they need to rest after meals.
- Short naps and rests can help but try to balance them with some [activity or exercise](#).
- If possible, go grocery shopping with a family member or friend, or shop online.
- [Spread housekeeping tasks over the week](#) and ask other people to do heavy work if you can.
- Prepare extra meals or double portions when you are feeling less tired and freeze them. Or try ready-made meals when you are most tired.
- Have a bath rather than a shower if you can.
- Sit down when you are getting dressed.
- [If you have children](#), explain that you are feeling tired. Plan activities with your children that you can do sitting down.
- Do not drive if you feel very tired. If possible, ask a family member or friend to drive you.
- [Complementary therapies](#) such as relaxation, massage therapy and yoga may help with fatigue.

Macmillan Cancer Support resources

We have more information on our [website](#), including audiobooks. Or you can order our free booklets and leaflets on be.macmillan.org.uk such as:

- [Coping with fatigue \(tiredness\)](#)
- [Cancer and complementary therapies](#)

We produce information in a [range of formats](#) and [languages](#). To order these, visit our website or call our support line.

Further Macmillan support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Or visit macmillan.org.uk where you can [chat to us online](#).

Deaf or hard of hearing? Call using NGT (Text Relay) on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the NGT Lite app. Speak another language? Telephone interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use.

Or if you want to share your experiences or ask questions, you can find others who understand on our [Online Community](#).

Other useful contact details

- The British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA) – visit www.bcma.co.uk
- British Holistic Medical Association – visit www.bhma.org
- British Reflexology Association – visit www.britreflex.co.uk

Notes and questions

