

# SUPPORT WITH CANCER-RELATED FATIGUE

## What is cancer-related fatigue?

Cancer-related fatigue is **an extreme form of tiredness and exhaustion**. It may be caused by the cancer itself or its symptoms. It can also be a side effect of treatment.

Symptoms can include:

- feeling tired or weak
- difficulty doing daily tasks, like getting dressed
- difficulty concentrating, or remembering things
- feeling low in mood or more irritable than usual
- losing interest in things you normally enjoy.

As many as **9 out of 10 people with cancer may feel fatigued** at some point, and fatigue can happen before, during or after treatment. The symptoms may not be helped by rest or sleep and can affect you physically and mentally.

It can be difficult to explain to others that what you are feeling is **more than just tiredness**. It's important to know that you are not alone, and that your experiences are valid and worthy of support.

## Zoe, from North Yorkshire says:

"Cancer-related fatigue affected my life significantly. The strategies I was shown to manage and recover from fatigue made a world of difference and really aided my recovery. I just wish I had known before my treatment started that fatigue could be minimalised with simple lifestyle choices. I believe it would have saved me a lot of time, effort and expense."

## Macmillan's Cancer Health & Wellbeing Support Service in Scarborough can help...

- with a friendly conversation about how you're feeling
- with resources to help you manage fatigue.



Drop in to the Cancer Information and Support Office at the **Main Entrance of Scarborough Hospital**.

Call the Wellbeing Team on the number below.



**01723 342606**

Or, scan the QR code to **email** the Wellbeing Team and receive a reply with more information and support.



## Things you can do to help manage fatigue:

Fatigue symptoms can be managed and supported, you don't have to suffer in silence. Understanding why you're feeling fatigued and making small changes can help to reduce its impact on your life. You can find what works for you, but here are some suggestions:



### Physical Activity

Although it may seem strange, there is good evidence that keeping active can help to reduce the symptoms of fatigue.

- Gentle activity can help to increase your energy, but it's important not to overdo it.
- You may want to try lower impact activities, such as cycling or aqua aerobics. Some activities can also be adapted to make them easier for people with limited mobility.
- Start simple, such as with walking and gentle stretches. You can build it up bit by bit.
- Pace yourself and pay attention to how you're feeling. Prioritise how you want to spend your time. Household chores are exercise too!
- Do not exercise if you feel unwell or in pain, and tell your doctor if you are worried.



### Eating Well

Eating well and focusing on nutrition can help improve cancer-related fatigue.

- Your appetite may be lower than usual before or during treatment. Try to eat foods you enjoy as this may help you to eat more.
- Meat, fish, eggs and pulses are good sources of protein. Protein is needed for growth of body tissue and muscle strength.
- Butter, margarine, oil, ghee and cream contain energy and fat-soluble vitamins and are helpful in small amounts.



### Mental Wellbeing

- Good quality sleep can help combat fatigue. Try to keep to a consistent sleep routine and if possible keep mobile phones out of the bedroom.
- Setting small goals each day can help you feel a sense of progress.
- If you are struggling with your mental health, speak to your doctor, who may be able to link you with the right support for you.

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### Carers' Corner

If you're a carer for someone living with cancer, your role is very important - but it can also be difficult for you.

- Communication is key: take time to talk and understand each other's needs and feelings
- Ask what you can do to help, so that the person with cancer can save their energy
- Seek support for yourself too: the Wellbeing Service is here to listen.