

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 people find their fatigue is very mild and it does not really affect their daily life. But for others, it is very disruptive. 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 dizzy or lightheaded
- feeling low in mood and more emotional than usual.

These effects can affect your daily activities or social life. Fatigue can also affect your relationships.

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 for extra help.
- Use a delivery service. Most large supermarkets offer online shopping and deliver it to your home.
- Spread housekeeping tasks over the week and ask other people to do heavy work if you can.
- Try having ready-made meals or pre-cooked food when you are most tired.
- Prepare extra meals or double portions when you are feeling less tired and freeze them for when you need them.
- Sit down in the bath rather than standing in a shower if you can, as this may help you use less energy.
- 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.
- There are different complementary therapies that may help with fatigue, such as relaxation, massage therapy and yoga.

Local resources:

Resource	Contact details

National resources:

Resource	Contact details
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The British Complementary Medicine Association (BCMA) 	<p>www.bcma.uk Tel 0845 345 5977 Email office@bcma.co.uk</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Holistic Medical Association 	<p>www.bhma.org</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Reflexology Association 	<p>www.britreflex.co.uk Tel 01886 821 2017 Email bra@britreflex.co.uk</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Acupuncture Council 	<p>www.acupuncture.org.uk Tel 020 8735 0400</p>

Further information

www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/tiredness

Our booklets and leaflets are available to order free on be.macmillan.org.uk

- **Coping with fatigue**

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm, or visit macmillan.org.uk

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.

We produce information in a range of formats and languages. To order these, visit macmillan.org.uk/otherformats or call our support line.

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