

Tired, exhausted or fatigued

Fatigue is feeling very tired or exhausted, most or all of the time. Cancer and cancer treatments can cause fatigue. Fatigue in people with cancer is sometimes called cancer-related fatigue or CRF. CRF is a very common problem. Most people who have cancer will experience fatigue at some point.

Fatigue is different from the tiredness someone without cancer may have. The tiredness can be more severe. And people with cancer may get tired more quickly after less activity. They may feel physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted even if they are getting enough rest and sleep.

For most people, fatigue gets better after treatment finishes. But it may continue for months or 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 getting dressed
- feeling weak and that you have no energy or strength
- difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- feeling breathless after doing gentle activity, dizzy or lightheaded
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia) or sleeping more than usual
- losing interest in sex
- feeling low in mood and more emotional than usual.

These effects can affect your daily activities, social life and your relationships. Fatigue may also affect you if you have other health conditions.

There are things you can do to help manage fatigue. But it is important to tell your healthcare team how you are feeling and how fatigue is affecting your life. Getting support from your healthcare team may help prevent or relieve some of these effects. It may also help improve your quality of life.

Tips for managing tiredness or fatigue

- Try to plan bigger tasks to fit in with the time of day when you feel least tired.
- Pace yourself, and plan activities without overdoing it. Some people find that breaking down an activity into smaller stages can help. Plan a rest after activities.
- Short naps and rests can help but try to balance them with some gentle physical activity such as walking.
- If possible, go grocery shopping with a family member or friend for extra help. Or 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 later.
- If you can, sit down in the bath rather than standing in a shower as this may save energy.
- Sit down when you are getting dressed and wear clothes that are easy to put on and take off.
- Explain to any children that you feel tired often. Plan activities you can do sitting down, such as a jigsaw.
- Do not drive if you feel very tired. If possible, ask a family member or friend to drive you.
- Different complementary therapies may help with fatigue, such as relaxation, massage therapy and yoga.
- If you want to keep working, many employers can make changes. These may include working from home if possible and planning work around times when you have more energy. If you are self-employed, it can help to talk to the Department for Work and Pensions about benefits that you may be entitled to.

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:

- [Cancer and complementary therapies](#)
- [Coping with fatigue \(tiredness\)](#)
- [Self-employment and cancer](#)
- [Work and cancer](#)
- [Work and cancer – easy read.](#)

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.

Our free [Macmillan Buddy service](#) can arrange weekly calls or visits with a friendly volunteer who understands what you're going through.

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

- British Acupuncture Council – visit www.acupuncture.org.uk or call **020 8735 0400**
- British Complementary Medicine Association – visit www.bcma.uk or call **0845 345 5977**
- British Holistic Medical Association – visit www.bhma.org
- British Reflexology Association – visit www.britreflex.co.uk or call **01886 821 2017**.

Notes and questions
