

How to Manage Cancer-Related Fatigue



Symptom Management

CANADIAN PARTNERSHIP
AGAINST CANCER



PARTENARIAT CANADIEN
CONTRE LE CANCER



Alberta Health
Services



SASKATCHEWAN
CANCER AGENCY



CancerCareManitoba
ActionCancerManitoba

Living Well With Cancer-Related Fatigue

7 short videos have been created with this booklet to help you better understand, and take steps to manage your cancer-related fatigue.

- **Introduction**
- **Module 1: Find Support and Be Patient**
- **Module 2: Pace Yourself**
- **Module 3: Managing Your Stress**
- **Module 4: Be Active**
- **Module 5: Eating Well**
- **Conclusion**

Hear helpful tips from experts and patients on things you can do to live well, despite feeling fatigued. See page 38 for more details. To watch the videos, visit myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/cancer-fatigue.

Watch for the symbol below in the book for sections that are included in the videos.



How to Use this Booklet

This booklet has 3 sections:

- Information about cancer-related fatigue
- What can I do to manage my fatigue?
- Resources and how to find more information

Read parts that interest you the most, and try different things. If your fatigue doesn't improve, ask your doctor for help.

Table of Contents

Information about Cancer-Related Fatigue

A	What is cancer-related fatigue?	2
B	What do you mean by self-manage my fatigue?	3
C	How do I know if I am ready for change?	4
D	What causes cancer-related fatigue?	6

What Can I do to Manage my Fatigue?

E	Be Active	7
	Cautions with Exercise	9
	Create an Exercise Plan.....	10
	Lying Down Exercises	12
	Sitting Exercises.....	14
	Deep Breathing Exercises.....	15
F	Improve Your Sleep	16
G	Manage Your Stress	17
	Talk to Someone.....	19
H	Eat Well	22
	Poor Nutrition and Cancer.....	24
I	Pace Yourself	25
J	Track Your Fatigue and Energy	26
	Calendar.....	30
K	Find Support	34
L	Be Patient, Feeling Better Takes Time	35

Resources and How to Find More Information

M	When should I talk to my health care team?	36
N	Where can I get more information	38
	Watch Fatigue Self-Management Videos.....	39

A

What is cancer-related fatigue?



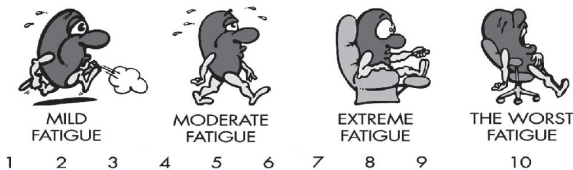
Watch the Introduction

Cancer-related fatigue is different from the fatigue (tiredness) you felt before you had cancer. It's a tiredness that lasts a long time and **does not go away with rest or sleep.**

Fatigue can make you feel:

- Very tired, weak, heavy or slow
- Worn out
- Like you can't think or remember things
- Like you don't have the energy to see people or do things you love
- Can be measured on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is no fatigue, and 10 is your worst possible fatigue

Fatigue Scale



Fatigue is usually worse during treatment. For some, it lasts for months or years after treatment is over. It may affect emotions, relationships, work, other parts of your life, and can make it difficult to do daily activities.

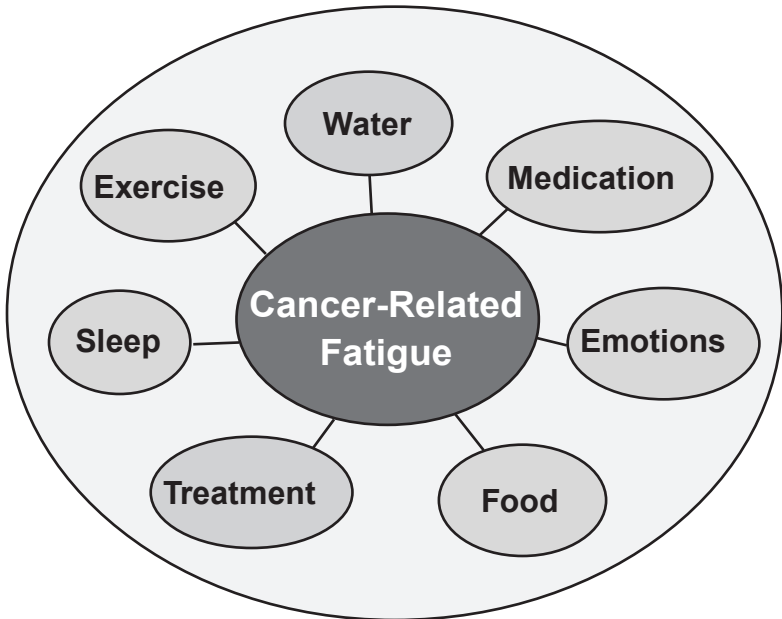
Fatigue ranges from mild to severe and may come and go. Everyone experiences fatigue differently, so it is important to understand how it affects you.

Fatigue is the most common symptom felt by people with cancer. **Fatigue is a normal part of your cancer treatment, but there are things you can do to improve it.**

B**What do you mean by self-manage my fatigue?**

If you are dealing with a health issue, you are the only one who knows how much this issue impacts you, and how important it is to work on.

Cancer-related fatigue is very common and can be related to many different things. We will talk about each of these things.



It can be overwhelming to try to change everything at once. Try **picking an area that:**

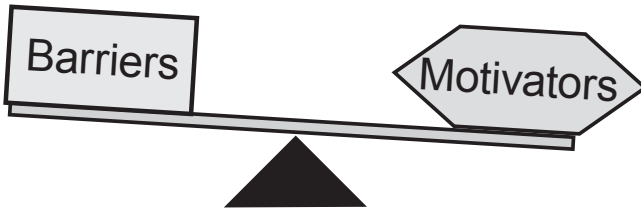
- Is easier to change, or
- You are interested in changing, or
- You think will be the most helpful

What do I do next?

- If you improve, try another area to get even better
- If you don't improve, try another area to see if it works for you

C**How do I know if I am ready for change?**

1. There are several steps in making a change.
 - Understand what causes your fatigue, and what you can do to improve it.
 - Think about what keeps you from making a change. This is called a **barrier**. For example, not having a ride to get to an exercise class is a barrier.
 - Think about what makes you want to make a change. This is called a **motivator**. For example, having more energy may mean you can visit your grandchildren.



2. Use your motivators to help you to **pick a task** to work on to improve your fatigue. This is when you **decide** to make a change, and **commit** to it.

“I want to see my grandchildren every week, so I need to exercise so I can have more energy to see them.”

Exercise

3. Now you need to **make a plan** so you know

- What you are going to do
 - » **Increase my exercise**
- How you are going to do it
 - » **Walk around my neighbourhood on Sundays and Wednesdays**
- What to do if a problem comes up
 - » **If the weather is bad, I will walk around the mall instead, or walk the next day**

4. Take action, and follow your plan.

- » **I have written my walks down on my calendar**
- » **I am walking with my son or daughter on Sundays**
- » **I will walk with my friend on Wednesdays**

5. Pay attention to how you are doing. This will help keep you motivated. Change the things that aren't working for you.



- » **I was able to visit my grandchildren last week for 1 hour (60 min) before feeling too tired.**
- » **I have started a yoga class on Wednesdays with my friend instead of walking.**

D

What causes cancer-related fatigue?

Causes of Cancer-Related Fatigue

Your fatigue may be caused by the cancer itself, treatments, or other health reasons. Finding and treating the causes of your fatigue is important to help you feel better. **Pick one area to focus on first.**

Some causes of cancer-related fatigue are:

- Emotional distress
- Sleep problems
- The cancer itself
- Cancer treatments
- Nausea and vomiting
- Pain
- Depression and or anxiety
- Medications
- Fatigue before treatment
- Other medical problems
- Lack of exercise
- Nutrition problems
- Anemia (low blood count)

If you have a **moderate to high level of fatigue**, your health care providers will need to do an individual assessment of your fatigue to understand how to help you.

Linking Energy and Fatigue

You may notice that as your fatigue increases, your energy to do things decreases (even with rest). Your energy levels may change from day to day, and at different times during the day.

Understanding how your energy levels change can help you to plan your day better — like when to rest, and when to get things done. **Learn how to track your fatigue on [page 25](#).**

What Can I do to Manage my Fatigue?

E

Be Active



Watch
Module 4

Research shows that exercise is the **best way** to improve and build up your energy, and improve your fatigue. The great thing about exercise is that our bodies adapt to it.

If you aren't used to exercising, start slowly:

- **Do short sessions more often**
- Try low to moderate activities (walking, yoga) for 5-10 minutes at a time
- Build up to exercising 30 minutes (half hour), 5 days a week



As you build up your strength, **aim for 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of low to moderate exercise per week.** You may not be able to meet this goal while on treatment, but don't get discouraged.

The most important thing is to be as active as you can. The activities shouldn't be too easy or too hard. Make sure you can still talk comfortably while you exercise.

Benefits of exercise:

- More energy, less fatigue
- Stronger muscles
- Less depression and anxiety
- Better appetite
- A feeling of well-being
- Better sleep



These tips can help you be more active:

- Choose a fun activity that suits your health and fitness level (walking, yoga, biking, gardening, hiking, jogging).
- Start slowly. Begin with light exercise like walking, swimming or yoga. Walk to the end of your driveway, up and down your hallway, or use a stationary bike.
- Go at your own pace. Slowly increase how much and how hard you exercise. Only do what you can — don't push too hard, too soon.
- As you build up strength, choose a mix of activities that increase your heart rate (like walking or cycling) and strength training (like lifting small weights).
- If 30 minutes of activity is too hard, split it up into shorter sessions — do 5 minute sessions 6 times during the day, or 10 minute sessions 3 times a day.
- Walk with a friend or a pet.

You should get a referral for physical therapy if you have:

- Other diagnosed health conditions like cardiovascular disease or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease).
- Bone metastases, low blood counts (like anemia), fever or infection, or are at a risk for falls.
- Recently had major surgery.
- Decreased range of motion such as with neck or breast surgery.
- Not been active for a very long time.

Cautions with Exercise



If you push yourself too hard or too soon, your body may react by making your fatigue worse, or make your muscles sore. There are steps you can take to make sure you exercise wisely and ease into your exercise routine.

If you have any of the following symptoms, do not exercise, or stop exercising. **If these are new symptoms, you should see a doctor:**

- Unusual fatigue or muscle weakness
- An irregular heart beat
- Leg pains or cramps
- Chest pain
- Feeling sick or are sick during exercise
- Vomiting within the last 2 – 3 days (24 – 36 hours)
- Dizziness or blurred vision
- Difficulty breathing
- Numbness in your hands or feet



Create an Exercise Plan



Your Plan Should Include:	Such As:
<p>Restrictions from your doctor or health care provider.</p>	<p>Your doctor may want you to wait a while before</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifting weights • Riding a bike
<p>Any injuries you have, old or new</p>	<p>Add any stretches or exercises your physiotherapist or health care provider gave you.</p>
<p>If you've had intravenous chemotherapy within 24 hours</p>	<p>Your doctor may want you to rest and recover before exercise.</p>
<p>If you have low blood counts</p>	<p>Don't exercise if you have low red blood cells, or low platelets.</p>
<p>Your current activity level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities are you currently doing? (Walking, gardening, yoga) • What activities have you stopped doing since your cancer diagnosis and during your treatments? (Grocery shopping, biking, tai chi) • What activities do you think you could resume doing and would enjoy right now?

How to build
upon your current
activity level

- Start by doing 5 –10 minutes of exercise 3 days a week.
- Add 5 – 10 minutes to your exercise each week. Build up to exercising 150 minutes (2.5 hours) per week.
- Adding in strength training which uses free weights, resistance machines, or weight bearing activities. Begin with small weights. Build up to doing 1 – 2 sets of 8 –12 repetitions, 2 – 3 times per week.
- Exercise with a friend or pet. Being social makes exercising more fun!
- Try going to a different place for a walk each week. Consider using some stairs in your walk.
- Make sure to stretch your muscles after you exercise.



Exercises



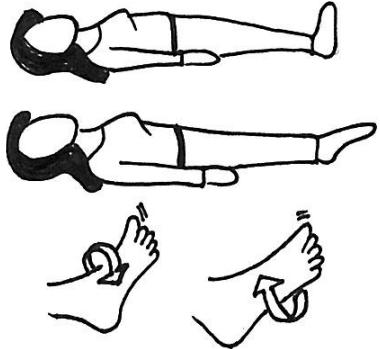
If your energy is very low and you find yourself very inactive, there are still things you can do to help build your strength and regain your energy. The following are simple exercises to get you started:

Lying Down Exercises

a) Ankle exercise:

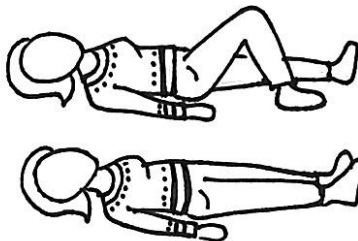
Pull your feet up and down, 10 times for each leg quickly.

Circle your ankles in a clockwise and counterclockwise direction, 10 times for each leg.



b) Knee flexion and extension:

Bend and then straighten your knee, 5 times for each leg.



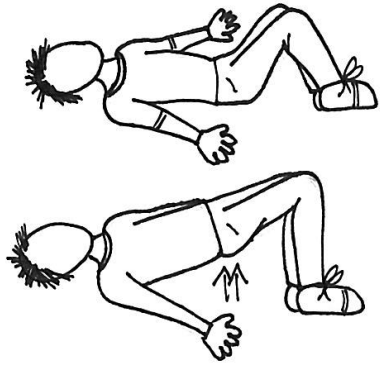
c) Static quadriceps (thigh muscles):

With your legs flat, pull your foot and toes up, push your knee firmly into the bed and tighten your thigh muscles, allowing your heels to lift slightly off the bed. Do this 5 times for each leg.



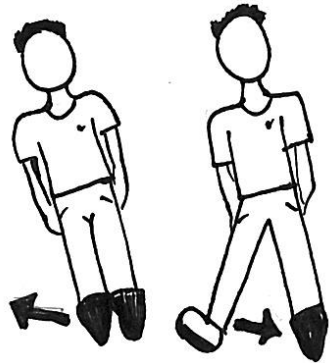
d) Pelvic lift

Bend your knees and plant your feet on the floor. Place your arms out by your sides. Squeeze your thigh, bum, and stomach muscles to lift your hips into the air.



e) Abduction and adduction:

With your legs flat, bring one of your legs out to the side as far as you can, stop, and then move it back to centre. Do this 5 times for each leg.

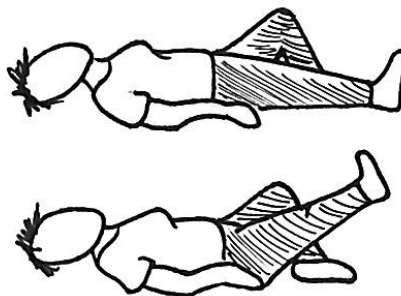


f) Straight leg raise:

Keep your leg straight by pushing your knee down into the bed; pull your foot and toes up.

Keeping your knee straight, lift this leg several inches off the bed.

If you can, hold to a count of 3. Slowly lower your leg back down. Do this 5 times for each leg.

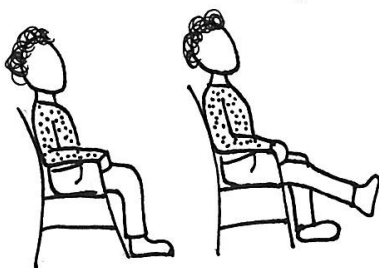


Sitting Exercises



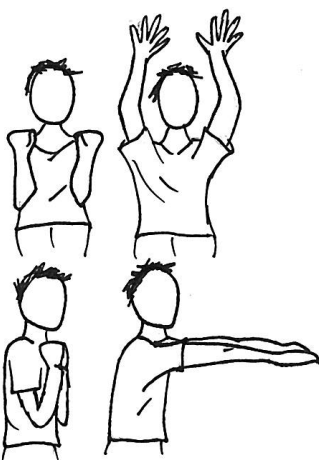
a) Inner quadriceps (thigh muscles):

Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscles and straighten and lift your knee. Hold for a count of 3 and slowly relax your leg, do this 5 times for each leg.



b) Arm exercises:

Lift both arms straight up above your head and then lower them out in front of you, do this 5 times.



c) Sit to stand:

Sit in a chair with your arms crossed over your chest, stand up and then sit down slowly. Do this 5 times.



Deep Breathing Exercises



- Relax your shoulders
- Sit up straight
- Place your hands on the sides of your chest
- Breathe in slowly through your nose
- Expand your chest and feel movement under your hands
- Hold for 3 seconds, then breathe out
- Try to take some deep breaths every 30 minutes (1/2 hour)

If you have tried our **tips for being more active** or our **‘start slowly’** exercises, but still need more help, ask your health care team to refer you to these experts:

- A physiotherapist
- An occupational therapist
- An exercise specialist





It's common for people with cancer to have problems sleeping but you can make small changes to get better rest.

Tips to help improve your sleep:

- Wake up at the same time each day. Do this no matter how many hours of sleep you had, even on the weekends. Open the curtains or go to a bright room after you wake up.
- If you nap, rest in a room other than your bedroom. Use your bed for sleep and intimacy only. Short naps of less than 1 hour (60 minutes), between 12pm and 3pm may give you more energy.
- Limit caffeine (coffee, tea, cola, chocolate) in the afternoon and evening.
- Limit alcohol in the afternoon and evening.
- Set time in the early evening to “clear-your-head” so you can do your problem solving, planning and worrying then.
- Relax before going to bed by: lowering the lights, reading, listening to music, or taking a bath.
- Try activities like: prayer, meditation, and imagery.
- At least 1 hour (60 minutes) before going to bed, turn off all screens: computers, TV's, and tablets.
- If you are still awake after 20 to 30 minutes, get out of bed. Do something relaxing until you feel sleepy and go back to bed. Only go to bed when you feel sleepy, regardless of what time it is.

You may want to try these **tips to improve your sleep habits** for a few weeks before you talk to your doctor about other options.

G**Manage Your Stress**Watch
Module 3

Stress is how your body responds to change, including changes in feelings, situations, or people. Some stress is good, and some stress is bad. There are ways to manage the kinds of stress that are bad for you.

Dealing with a cancer diagnosis and its treatments can also create a mix of emotions like fear, worry, anger, appreciation and hope. Managing your emotions is as important as managing your stress.

When you experience change, your body uses energy to adjust or adapt. This adds to your feeling of fatigue. If the change is severe (lasts for a long time, or many things happen at once), your body will start to run low of energy.

Your stress can change throughout your diagnosis, during treatment, and after treatment. Your stress can be related to your diagnosis, family changes and treatment symptoms or from pushing yourself too hard.



Tips to help manage your stress:

- **Know your stress signs.** Noticing the early signs of stress helps you decide what you need or want to do before you run out of energy or are unable to cope.
- **Exchange your stress.** If a new stress comes into your life, make room for it. Don't let your stresses pile up, try exchanging them. For example, if you have to drive in for an appointment, ask someone to drive your kids to school.
- **Use what you know.** There are things you already do to handle stress: exercising, talking, or organizing your time. Learn and practice new ways to handle stress, such as asking others for help.

Focus on Positive Things and Things you can Control

It can help to focus on positive things like gratitude, or being thankful for things in your life. This doesn't mean you need to be positive all the time — that is not realistic or healthy, it just means taking time to focus on something positive to help you feel better. For example:

- Focus on living each moment and each day as it comes – rather than worrying about what comes next.
- Look for positive things in your day or life and practice feeling grateful for them.
- If you feel fear, try to change your mind by changing activities. Don't let fear take over. Sometimes just doing something else can help you think about positive things.
- Look for ways to relax and manage your stress. Try laughing, going to a movie, going outdoors or doing an activity to help you relax.
- Participate in something that brings a sense of purpose or meaning to your life, like volunteering or work.

Talk to Someone



Watch
Module 2

If you have stress related to being at work during or after cancer treatments, there are things you can do. Consider talking to your employer or Human Resource department about reducing your hours or changing your responsibilities.

Consider talking to someone about your stress and emotions. Ask your health care provider to refer you to a/an:

- Social worker
- Counsellor
- Psychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Spiritual care provider
- Psychosocial oncology nurse
- Occupational therapist



Practice Mind-Body, or Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)



This option may not be right for everyone. Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) includes different healing approaches and therapies that are not considered to be conventional Western medicine. There isn't enough evidence to say if they will or will not improve your fatigue.

There is an important difference between complementary medicine and alternative medicine:

- Complementary medicine is **used together** with conventional medicine.
- Alternative medicine is **used instead** of conventional medicine.

It is your choice to use or not to use CAM to try to manage your fatigue. It is very important to talk to your oncology care team if you are thinking about using CAM or have questions.



Common Complementary and Alternative Medicines	
Yoga	Physical postures develop strength, flexibility, and relaxation. Awareness of body and breath with each pose.
Mind-Body Medicine	Meditation, hypnosis, guided imagery, and art and music therapy. Research has shown these therapies can improve your quality of life.
Biological-Based Medicine	Vitamins, minerals, and herbs. Natural health products can cause serious side effects. These products can interfere with your treatments. Talk to your oncologist before taking any biological-based medicines.
Manipulative and Body-Based Practices	Massage therapy, physical therapy, and chiropractic therapy. These practices may help reduce anxiety, depression, pain, and fatigue. Your doctor may not want you to use these practices as there may be too much pressure on areas such as your tumour or surgical site. If you have bone cancer or metastatic disease, do not go to the chiropractor.
Energy Therapies	Reiki, therapeutic touch, magnetic therapy, acupuncture, and qi gong. It is important to know that acupuncture has not been shown to improve cancer-related fatigue.
Whole Medical Systems	First Nations Traditional Healing, Naturopathy, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and Aryurvedic Medicine. Talk to your doctor before you take any supplements, teas or herbs.



Eating well is a great way to give your body energy. You may have heard that cancer patients need to eat more protein. This is true. Your body **needs extra protein to heal and grow**. Good sources of protein include meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, protein powder, nuts, tofu, beans and lentils.

Your body also **needs a lot of water to heal and grow**. Try to drink at least 8 cups (2 litres) per day (unless your doctor told you to drink more or less). Try filling a 2 liter bottle (8 cups) each day, and drink the bottle by the end of the day.

Tips to help you eat well when you have fatigue:

- Cook when you have energy. Make extras, or have someone help you.
- Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Buy healthy, convenient food (cut up fruit and vegetables), frozen dinners.
- Try adding protein powder to smoothies and some of your regular recipes. Most protein powders are in the form of whey or soya. Ask for recipes and ideas from cancer centre dietitians.
- Boost Plus Calories® and Ensure Plus Calories® make easy meal replacements, especially on the go. Just make sure you are getting enough calories if this is all you are eating.
- **Follow a balanced diet*** with a variety of foods from the four food groups: vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives, meat and alternatives.

*Unless you were told by a health care team member to eat a specific diet or avoid specific foods.

If eating well is a challenge for you, try to think about what is getting in the way of your healthy eating. Write these concerns down, and then try to think of ways you can overcome these challenges. For example:

“I don’t have enough time or energy”

- Ask someone to help you cook
- Buy ready-made meals from the grocery store, like roasted chicken and frozen meals, or shop from the salad bar
- Make enough for leftovers

“I don’t know what to eat, or I can’t decide”

- Plan your meal ideas a week in advance. Ask a friend or family member to help you cook
- Stock your fridge with protein and high calorie snack options like puddings, eggs, Ensure Plus Calories® or Boost Plus Calories®, ice cream and yogurt

You can also ask your health care team to refer you to a registered dietitian. A dietitian can help you find ways to meet your energy needs and help with symptoms that make eating a challenge.



Poor Nutrition and Cancer

Cancer patients can be at risk for poor nutrition (by eating too much or too little). This can happen for a number of reasons:

- Poor appetite
- Side effects of treatment making it difficult to eat
- Changes to how your body digests, absorbs, and uses food
- Unplanned weight changes (weight loss or gain)
- Eating limited kinds of food
- The cancer treatments
- The cancer itself

There are things that can help you improve your nutrition.



Seeing a Registered Dietitian is Important



They can help you plan how to manage your nutrition during and after your cancer treatments by:

- Managing side effects that affect your food intake
- Meal planning
- Connecting you with nutrition resources

Some patients will need extra help to manage their nutrition, such as appetite stimulants or feeding tubes.



When you are fatigued you need to use your energy wisely to do the things that are most important to you. Tips to save your energy:

Plan Ahead

- Plan your day with time to rest before and after activities.
- Spread out tasks like housework over a longer time.
- Ask people to help with things like housework, child care, pet care, or shopping.
- Arrange your home so that most activities can be done on one floor. Keep supplies within easy reach.
- Plan activities where you can sit down to rest.

Prioritize

- Decide which activities are most important to you and use your energy for those.
- Put off less important activities.



Pace

- Do one activity at a time, without rushing.
- Stop and rest before you get tired, even if it means stopping in the middle of a task.

Position

- If possible, sit when you do things like folding laundry or preparing food.
- Use walking aids, such as handrails, grab bars, a cane, or a walker.
- Avoid lifting anything over 10 lbs (pounds).



J

Track Your Fatigue and Energy



Watch
Module 2

Your health care team wants to know how you are feeling. Track your fatigue so that you can tell your health care team about your fatigue at **every** appointment.

Pace and schedule activities for times you feel your best.

During cancer treatment, the type of treatment(s) and how often you have them may affect your fatigue. You may notice that you are the most tired after chemotherapy, or towards the end of the week during radiation treatments.

If you write this information down, you can ‘track’ your fatigue. You may need to track your fatigue for several weeks to understand your pattern.

Use the calendar on [page 30](#) to record your fatigue. Learn how your cancer, its treatments, and your activities can affect your fatigue and energy levels. Use this information to schedule your activities when you have energy.

How to track your fatigue



Consider tracking your fatigue (and energy levels) at the same time each day. This could be in the morning where you write down how you felt the day before, or before you go to bed. See [page 30 – 32](#) for a sample calendar.

Think about your fatigue like the lights of a traffic light.

- Green light means ‘**go**’. You have the energy to do your daily activities.
- Yellow light means ‘**caution**’. You may find you are not always able to do your daily activities.
- Red light means ‘**stop**’. This means you are not able to do your activities. Speak to a health care provider to find out what might be causing your fatigue, and how to manage it.

Recording Your Fatigue



Rate your fatigue on a scale of 0 – 10, where 0 is no fatigue, and 10 is your worst possible fatigue. Write it down.



GREEN ZONE: Fatigue levels between 1 – 3:

- You have mild fatigue
- With this level of fatigue, you are able to do the things you want to do
- Self-management strategies are helpful in minimizing the impact of this level of fatigue

In this zone you can:

- Keep track of your fatigue with a calendar or journal
- Keep up with your exercise routine
- Visit websites and read about managing cancer-related fatigue



YELLOW ZONE: Fatigue levels between 4 – 6:

- This is a general warning signal, your fatigue may be getting to a point where you need more support
- You are having trouble keeping up with activities
- Now is a good time to start using the tips in this booklet
- You may need help from a professional

In this zone you can:

- Keep exercising, but you may need to decrease how hard you are working based on your energy levels
- Learn about common causes of fatigue and try some fatigue management strategies in this booklet
- Attend fatigue classes, or watch fatigue-related self-management videos
- Talk to your medical team



RED ZONE: Fatigue levels between 7 – 10:

- You are not able to keep up with your activities for several days
- You feel like sleeping all of the time for several days
- You'll need tests (such as blood work) to see if there are any physical causes of fatigue
- You'll need an intervention plan to help you manage your fatigue
- Get a referral to a specialist to help you manage your fatigue
- Simple exercises like walking can help manage your fatigue
- Use energy-saving assistive devices like wheelchairs, walkers, “reachers” for grabbing things, or rolling carts for moving things
- Sometimes medications can help, but there is no evidence that they really work. Speak to your health care provider to learn more

In this zone you should contact your health care team to:

- Ensure your medical team is aware of your fatigue
- Have your blood counts checked
- Ask for a referral to a specialist



Recording Impact

Your impact level shows how much your fatigue upsets your daily activities on a scale of 0–10. For example, are you able to do the things you need to do, like grocery shopping or running errands? If so, you might rate your impact between 0 – 3. In this case, your level of fatigue is not stopping you from carrying out your activities. If you have higher levels of fatigue, your level of impact might increase.

Recording Treatment



Some people notice they are more tired on the days of a cancer treatment. The impact and number of days can vary from person to person, and from treatment to treatment. Marking down on your calendar when you have treatment can help you understand if your cancer treatments affect your level of fatigue.

Recording your Exercise



Some people notice they are less tired on the days they exercise. However, if you exercise too much, you may also notice you are more tired after exercising.

Exercise responsibly while you get your cancer treatments. Keep track of when you exercise, and the type of exercise you do. This can help you see if exercise helps you manage your fatigue.

Recording Notes



Sometimes fatigue is affected by many things. Keep track of medication changes, sleep patterns, having a cold, or having another stressful life event to see how this can affect your fatigue.

Calendar

This calendar is an example of how you can track your fatigue and other activities.

Enter the number from 0 – 10 (where 0 is the best, 10 is the worst) for Fatigue and Impact. Mark down if you had a treatment, or exercised. Make a note if there is anything else that may affect your fatigue.

	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date
Fatigue	2	2	5	3
Impact	1	1	4	1
Treatment		Chemo Radiation	Radiation	Radiation
Exercise	35 min walk			15 min walk
Notes	good sleep	went to bed early		

Use the calendars on the next 3 pages to track and understand your fatigue.



Tracking on a Website

Try tracking your energy throughout the day by writing down what gives you energy, and what drains your energy.

Visit www.cancerandwork.ca/?s=energizers.

	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date	Thur Date	Fri Date	Sat Date
Fatigue							
Impact							
Treatment							
Exercise							
Notes							
	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date	Thur Date	Fri Date	Sat Date
Fatigue							
Impact							
Treatment							
Exercise							
Notes							

Enter the number from 0 –10 (where 0 is the best, 10 is the worst) for Fatigue and Impact. Mark down if you had a treatment, and if you exercised. Make a note if there is anything else that may affect your fatigue.

	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date	Thur Date	Fri Date	Sat Date
Fatigue							
Impact							
Treatment							
Exercise							
Notes							
	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date	Thur Date	Fri Date	Sat Date
Fatigue							
Impact							
Treatment							
Exercise							
Notes							

Enter the number from 0 –10 (where 0 is the best, 10 is the worst) for Fatigue and Impact. Mark down if you had a treatment, and if you exercised. Make a note if there is anything else that may affect your fatigue.

	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date	Thur Date	Fri Date	Sat Date
Fatigue							
Impact							
Treatment							
Exercise							
Notes							
	Sun Date	Mon Date	Tue Date	Wed Date	Thur Date	Fri Date	Sat Date
Fatigue							
Impact							
Treatment							
Exercise							
Notes							

Enter the number from 0 –10 (where 0 is the best, 10 is the worst) for Fatigue and Impact. Mark down if you had a treatment, and if you exercised. Make a note if there is anything else that may affect your fatigue.

You don't have to cope with your fatigue alone. There are many places to find support in your community and through your health care team.

Tips to help you find support:

- Be honest with your loved ones about how you feel and what your challenges and concerns are. Come up with solutions and approaches together.
- Allow yourself to limit who and when you visit. Make plans with people who make you feel better.
- Be clear and direct when you ask people for support. People may not know the best way to help. Try asking for specific things like “Can you pick my daughter up from school today?” or “Can you bring something over for dinner Saturday?”
- Talk to or read about people with similar experiences. Online and in-person support groups, discussion forums, blogs, or books written by cancer survivors might help. Visit www.cancerconnection.ca.
- Support your spiritual needs through nature, religion, or activities that bring you peace of mind, like writing or music.

L

Be Patient, Feeling Better Takes Time

Small changes can improve your fatigue over time. Often it is only when you look back that you can see how much better you feel.

Tips to help you make changes:

- Listen to your body and adjust your activities
- Start slowly and progress gradually with practice
- Set easy, realistic goals
- Recognize and celebrate what you achieve along the way

Sometimes **even after trying all of these tips you may still feel fatigue**. Be gentle and kind to yourself during this difficult time.



M

When should I talk to my health care team?

Your health care team wants to know how you are feeling. Tell your health care team how you are feeling at **every** appointment.

During clinic visits you may be asked to fill out a form called **Putting Patients First**. This form helps to inform your health care team how you feel now, and over time.

This form rates how you feel between 0 – 10, on many different types of symptoms. How you rate your symptoms helps your health care team decide the best way to help you.

Medical Emergencies



Watch the Conclusion

Tell your health care team right away if you have these symptoms:

- Dizziness, loss of appetite or falls
- Fatigue that is suddenly much worse
- Sudden shortness of breath or a fast heart beat
- Unexplained bleeding or bleeding that does not stop
- Anxiety, depression or feelings of not coping well



Preparing for your Next Appointment

Ask yourself these questions:

1. When did my fatigue start? _____
2. How bad is my fatigue? (0 – 10 score) _____
3. Is my fatigue making it hard for me to enjoy my life?
If yes, in what way? _____
4. What are the most stressful symptoms of my fatigue?

5. What have I tried to do to reduce my fatigue?

What to bring to your appointment:

- If you've been tracking your fatigue in this booklet, bring it to your next appointment.
- Medications including prescriptions, vitamins, herbal and natural health products.
- A list or journal of all of your appointments, tests, treatments and results.
- A family member or friend to help you with questions or to write down information.

Your health care team wants to know about your fatigue. Your concerns and questions are important. Do not be afraid to ask them.



N Where can I get more information?

Visit Websites

- My Health Alberta, <https://myhealth.alberta.ca>, search 'fatigue'
- Canadian Cancer Society, www.cancer.ca, search 'fatigue'
- U of C Health and Wellness Lab
www.ucalgary.ca/healthandwellnesslab
- www.dietitians.ca
- The CAMEO website: www.cameoprogram.org
- The Canadian Cancer Society's website:
www.bit.ly/CCS-complementary-and-alternative-therapies

Contact Support Services

- Cancer Chat Canada www.cancerchatcanada.ca

	Calgary	Edmonton
Psychosocial Oncology	403-355-3207	780-643-4303
Rehabilitation, Occupational or Physiotherapy	403-476-2448	780-432-8716 780-432-8798
Wellspring	403-521-5292	780-758-4433

* You may be referred to support services available in your local area.

Watch Fatigue Self-Management Videos

Living Well With Cancer-Related Fatigue

7 short videos have been created with this booklet to help you better understand and take steps to manage your cancer-related fatigue.

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is cancer related fatigue? • What cause it?
Module 1: Find Support and Be Patient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling better will take time • Goal Setting • Talk to your health care team • Medical conditions and fatigue • The impact of fatigue
Module 2: Pace Yourself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking your fatigue: Green, Yellow, and Red Zones • Preparing for your next appointment
Module 3: Managing Your Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and emotions • Improving your sleep • Brain fog • Complementary and alternative therapies
Module 4: Exercise and Be Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise examples, benefits, and cautions
Module 5: Nutrition and Eating Well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What to eat • Tips for eating when you have fatigue • Speaking with a Registered Dietitian
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where to get more information • Medical Emergencies

Hear helpful tips from experts and patients on things you can do to live well, despite feeling fatigued.

Visit myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/cancer-fatigue



Other Videos on www.YouTube.com:

- Cancer-Related Fatigue — by Dr. Mike Evans
- 23 and 1/2 Hours — by Dr. Mike Evans

Acknowledgment:

The information in this guide was adapted from the following patient tools: “How to manage your fatigue” (Cancer Care Ontario), “Managing cancer-related fatigue: For people affected by cancer” (Canadian Partnership Against Cancer), and “A guide for exercising during and after treatment for cancer” (The Christie NHS Foundation Trust).

This booklet was built through a collaborative partnership between cancer agencies in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

This patient guide provides information only — it does not replace medical advice. Speak to your health care team about any questions you may have.

