

Fatigue



Beaufort County Medical Center

Medical Management

One of the most common side effects of cancer treatment is a feeling of extreme tiredness or fatigue. If you have extreme tiredness, it is important to discuss this with your medical care team. If there are underlying, treatable causes, these can be addressed. Please talk to your doctor or nurse for additional information about medical and lifestyle management of extreme tiredness if you have questions about these issues.

Using Nutrition to Help Yourself

If you have extreme tiredness, getting the right nutrition becomes even more important to your well-being. Fueling your body properly will help you better manage tiredness and fatigue.

Nutrition Tips for Extreme Tiredness

- If you cannot eat for more than a day because you are simply too tired to prepare and consume food, call your doctor or nurse right away.
- Eat five or six small, nutritious meals and snacks each day.
- If you are not losing weight, do not overeat for energy. This can cause excess weight gain. Carrying around extra weight will worsen extreme tiredness.
- If you find yourself overeating due to stress, depression, anxiety, or other emotions, talk to your doctor or nurse about options for managing these issues, such as seeing a counselor, joining a support group, exercise, or anti-anxiety or antidepressant medication.
- Drink plenty of noncaffeinated fluid every day.
- Take a basic multivitamin to meet your vitamin and mineral needs. Pick a supplement that contains no more than 100 percent to 200 percent of the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) of each nutrient. Do not take megadose vitamins or dietary supplements. These can interfere with your cancer treatments.

What to Eat and Drink

- Drink plenty of fluids. Try water, tea, 100 percent fruit juice, or an electrolyte replacement sport drink. If you use a sport drink such as Gatorade, try one that contains no more than 50 calories per serving and that does not contain artificial sweeteners.

- Carry healthy, convenient foods with you so you can have a quick snack when needed. Try fruit; nuts; yogurt; whole grain crackers or pretzels; single-serving sizes of canned fruit, tuna, or chicken; trail mix; or granola or power bars.
- Try fruit smoothies and other quick and healthy blender meals and snacks. You can prepare one for breakfast and sip it throughout the morning for a steady intake of nutrition.
- Focus on protein. Your body needs protein to repair, heal, and rebuild your immune system and your blood cells. Convenient high-protein food includes cottage cheese; canned meat or fish, such as tuna, chicken, or salmon; nuts and seeds; hard-boiled eggs; and peanut butter.
- Eat balanced snacks and meals that include a fiber-rich complex carbohydrate, some healthy fat, and some protein. Combining these nutrients will give you long-lasting energy. For example, try eating a piece of fruit plus a handful of walnuts, almonds, peanuts, or other nuts. Try fruit with cottage cheese. Try a handful of soy nuts, which are rich in both protein and fiber.



What to Avoid

- Large amounts of coffee or other sources of caffeine. If you regularly drink some coffee, this is fine, but do not use extra coffee and caffeine for energy.
- Regular soda pop, which is loaded with sugar and will make you more tired in the long run.
- Sugary food, such as candy, cakes, doughnuts, baked goods, cookies, pies, and other dessert foods. These may give a quick "energy boost," but you will feel worse once this feeling wears off.
- Sugar substitutes, such as Nutrasweet, Splenda, mannitol, and sorbitol.
- Fatty, greasy, fried, and spicy food, which can make you feel heavy and lethargic.