

Managing Fatigue or Tiredness

The following information is based on the general experiences of many prostate cancer patients. Your experience may be different. If you have any questions about what prostate cancer treatment services are covered by your health insurance, please contact your health care provider or health insurance provider.

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Please feel free to read only those parts of the booklet you need now. You don't need to read everything right now. You can always read more later.

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What Will I Learn By Reading This Booklet?

When you have **chemotherapy** (key-mo-ther-a-pee) to control your prostate cancer, you may have **side effects** or unwanted changes in your body. Side effects are different from person to person, and may be different from one treatment to the next. Some people have no or very mild side effects. The good news is that there are ways to deal with most of the side effects. In this booklet you will learn:

- What **fatigue** or tiredness is
- How to know if you have fatigue
- Things you can do to help manage your fatigue
- When to call your doctor

It is important for you to learn how to manage the side effects you may have from chemotherapy so that you can keep doing as many of your normal activities as possible.

Words that appear in **bold** (dark text) can be found in the “Key Words” section at the end of this booklet.

What Is Fatigue Or Tiredness?

During your chemotherapy treatment, you may start to feel very tired. You may feel tired all the time or you may get tired more easily when you do daily activities. This is known as fatigue or tiredness. Fatigue is the most common side effect or unwanted change in your body reported by patients on chemotherapy treatment.



How Do I Know If I Have Fatigue Or Tiredness?

Some signs of fatigue are:

- Feeling like you have no energy
- Sleeping more than you normally do
- Not wanting to or being able to do your normal daily activities
- Paying less attention to the way you look
- Feeling tired even after you sleep
- Having trouble thinking or concentrating
- Having trouble finding words and speaking

If you have any of these signs talk to your doctor or health care team. There can be physical causes for your fatigue, like an **infection** or pain that they can help you manage.

It is important that you talk to your doctor or health care team about any side effects you may have during or after your treatment. Your health care team can help treat these problems.

What Can I Do To Manage My Fatigue?

Just as every cancer patient's treatment is different, the fatigue each person feels is also different. While one person may feel very tired, another may not. And one person's fatigue may last longer than another person's. However, there are things you can do to help deal with this treatment side effect.

- Remember to get plenty of rest, but don't lie in bed or sit in a chair more than you have to. Too much rest can lower your energy level. In other words, the more you rest, the more tired you will feel. If you have trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor or health care team.
- Activity helps you fight fatigue. Try to add more activity to your schedule each day. For example: if you can walk for five minutes today, try walking for six minutes tomorrow.
- Try to plan your day so that light activities (eating, sitting, watching television, or reading) are spaced between activities that take more of your energy (going to the doctor, walking around the block, or going to a family gathering).
- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Go to bed the same time each night, even if you don't feel sleepy. If you never watched late-night TV before, don't start now. Don't sleep or nap after supper. Don't "sleep in" more or longer than you used to.

- Naps can be good if they last for short amounts of time (not longer than 30 to 40 minutes). Be sure to get up and move around between them.
- If you are so ill that you can't get out of bed for very long, a family member or friend can help you with bed exercises. Bed exercises are easy stretches you can do to help keep some of your muscle strength and keep your blood flowing. Ask your doctor or health care team for a list of exercises you can do.
- Drink plenty of fluids, at least 8 eight-ounce glasses of water each day. This will help you from feeling dizzy when you stand or sit up. It also will help your muscles feel stronger.
- Let other people help you do some of your normal daily activities like grocery shopping, laundry or cleaning your home.
- Write down what you do and how you feel during different parts of the day. Once you know what makes you more tired and when this happens, you can plan ahead.
- Fatigue can also be caused by pain that is not well controlled or by not sleeping well at night (**insomnia**). Report any pain you have or trouble sleeping to your doctor or health care team.
- Try activities such as meditation, prayer, yoga, guided imagery, or visualization. These activities may help lower your fatigue.

- Report any signs of fatigue to your doctor or health care team.
- Speak to your doctor or health care team about medicines you can take to help manage your fatigue.

Plan For Managing Your Fatigue

- Who is going to help you with your daily activities like grocery shopping or doing the laundry? List their name and contact information:

- What activities do you do that make your fatigue worse?

- What activities do you do that make your fatigue better?

- How do you get in touch with your doctor or health care team if you need help?

When Should I Call My Doctor?

You should call your doctor if you:

- Are too tired to get out of bed for more than a 24-hour period
- Become confused
- Get dizzy, lose your balance or fall
- Have a problem waking up
- Have a problem catching your breath
- Have fatigue that keeps getting worse



Fatigue caused by chemotherapy treatment will get better. Your energy will slowly come back once your treatment has ended.

Doctor's Name	
Doctor's office phone number	
Doctor's pager	

What Have I Learned By Reading This?

In this booklet, you learned about:

- What fatigue is,
- How to know if you have fatigue,
- Things you can do to manage your fatigue,
- When to contact your doctor

If you have any questions, please talk to your doctor or health care team. It is important that you understand what is going on with your prostate cancer treatment. This knowledge will help you take better care of yourself and feel more in control so that you can get the most from your treatment.

Key Words

Chemotherapy (key-mo-ther-a-pee): a prostate cancer treatment, which treats your whole body with powerful anticancer medicines to kill many of your prostate cancer cells.

Fatigue: mental or physical tiredness.

Infection: when germs enter your body causing you to have a fever or pain, redness, and swelling in one part of your body.

Insomnia: difficulty falling or staying asleep.

Side Effects: unwanted changes in your body caused by your prostate cancer treatment.