



Eating and Drinking Better with Fatigue

Information for Patients and Carers

Fatigue or extreme tiredness is a common symptom of cancer. It can also occur as a result of side effects of cancer treatment or of medications you may be taking.

You may also feel tired if you do not eat or drink enough to give your body the energy that it needs. This can affect your energy levels, body weight, mood and your ability to carry out your usual daily tasks.

Other factors that can lead to fatigue include:

- Pain
- Worry
- Journey or travel time to and from appointments
- Disturbed sleep pattern
- Lack of physical activity
- Breathlessness

The good thing is that there are things you can do to help make life easier when you are feeling this way.

Accept offers of help from friends or family

Support with shopping, meal preparation, lifts to appointments or even some general household chores can be enough to allow you to direct the energy you do have in to doing something that you would like to do. This may include taking part in your favourite hobby.

Organise support from services

Charities, organisations and local authority services may be able to help you with shopping, meal preparation, personal care, household chores or travel to appointments. Contact your local council or oncology department to find out which organisations can help.

Use ready meals, tinned or packet foods

On days where you find it difficult to prepare a meal you could rely on microwave meals or convenience foods. This way you will still get the vital energy and nutrients that your body needs. You could also consider using a slow cooker or pressure cooker to save energy.

Arrange meal delivery services

Meals can be delivered directly to your home from your local authority meal service or other organisations including Wiltshire Farmfoods, Blueberry Hill, Oakhouse Foods.



Cook in batch

Cook a large meal, split it in to smaller portions and freeze. Tomato sauces or curries can be pre-made. This way you will have something pre-made that you can defrost and cook on days when your energy levels are low.

Choose soft foods

If the effort of chewing a tough piece of meat is enough to put you off eating, try soft foods. These will require less chewing and may be easier to manage.

Remember to eat and drink regularly

You may be sleeping more than you usually would. Sleeping throughout the day can mean missing mealtimes. It is ok if you find yourself eating at different times throughout the day but it is important you remember to eat at another time.

Take something to eat or drink with you

If you are out of the house either at treatment or socially and you know you will be away from home for more than a couple of hours take a snack and a drink with you.

Eat when you feel most awake

Try having a cooked meal at lunchtime and a snack in the evening if you tire throughout the day.

Physical Activity

- Continue to do the tasks you feel able to do
- Ask for support for the tasks you feel less able to do yourself
- Try walking or being more active around the house; hoovering, gardening, dusting
- Being outdoors can help to stimulate your appetite and improve your mood
- A short walk around your street or even your garden can improve the way you feel about your tiredness. It can help you to feel more positive even if you do feel tired later.

Improve your bedtime routine

Fatigue is not usually linked to lack of sleep however there are things you can do to improve your sleep routine which may help to improve your energy level.

- Have a snack before bed if you wake up due to hunger
- Limit your intake of fluid for a couple of hours before going to bed to reduce the risk of you waking to urinate
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol and sugary foods and drinks in the evening. These are stimulants and can keep you awake.

Pain management

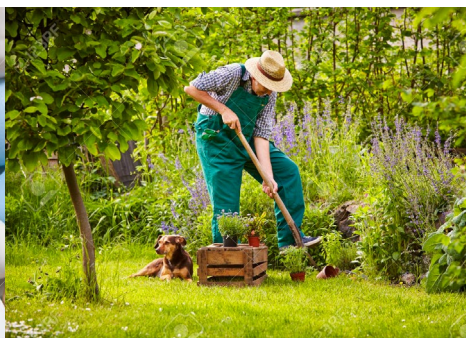
Speak to your healthcare team to make sure you are on the right medication and dose for you.

Self-care

Practice relaxation or stress relief techniques. Save your energy for the tasks you really enjoy doing.

It can help to talk

You may wish to discuss how you are feeling with someone. Many organisations offer counselling and other forms of support.



Helpful Tips

Smaller appetite?

Eating and drinking less?

Losing weight?

Try some of these tips to increase the energy and protein content of your diet.

Have something to eat or drink every 2-3 hours

- Pancake, scone or crumpet with butter, jam or nut spread
- Crackers with spreading cheese or cheddar cheese
- Toast with mashed banana or sliced avocado
- Individual dessert pot such as; custard, rice pudding, mousse, yoghurt
- Handful of nuts or seeds

Choose drinks that are high in calories

These all count towards your overall fluid intake.

- Full-cream milk
- Yoghurt drinks or Kefir
- Hot chocolate made with full-cream milk as an alternative to water
- Tea or coffee drinks made with full-cream or condensed milk
- Packet soup or packet pasta made with full-cream milk as an alternative to water
- Fruit juice
- Full sugar fizzy drink
- Malted drink i.e. Horlicks, Ovaltine, supermarket own brand
- Smoothie

Fortify foods that you already have such as soup, scrambled eggs, stews and mashed potatoes with:

- Double cream
- Creme fraiche
- Full-cream or condensed milk
- Thick and creamy yoghurt or full-fat greek yoghurt

Add a sauce to puddings such as: sponge, fruit, crumble, tart

- Custard
- Thick and creamy yoghurt
- Honey or syrup
- Rice pudding