

Cancer Related Fatigue



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Definition

Cancer-related fatigue is a distressing persistent, subjective sense of physical, emotional and/or cognitive tiredness or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment. It is not proportional to any recent activity and interferes with usual functioning.



Factors that can contribute to Cancer-related Fatigue

- Direct effect of cancer/tumor burden
- Side effects of treatment
- Other medical conditions
- Anxiety or Depression
- Deconditioning
- Sleep disturbances
- Malnutrition
- Pain



How Fatigue Affects You and Your Life

- Difficulty concentrating or accomplishing task
- Ability to work or manage household activities
- Interferes with Activities of daily living: showers, meals, chores
- Depression, anxiety or lack of motivation
- Inability to find enjoyment in things that once brought you pleasure



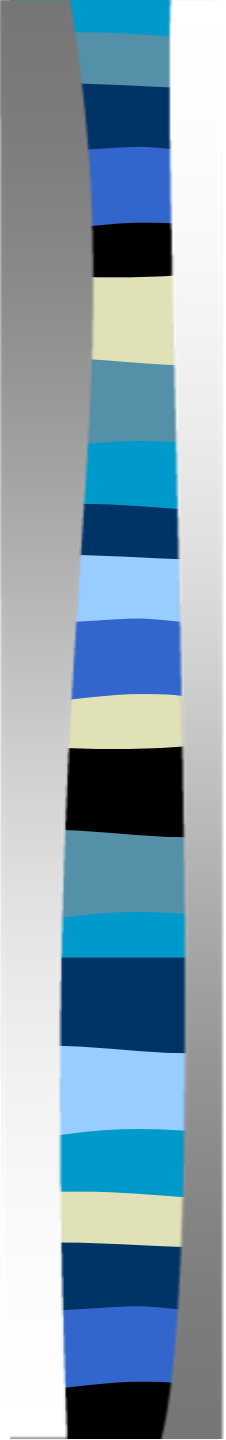
Managing Your Fatigue

- Keep a diary to develop fatigue patterns:
- Write down when fatigued good/bad
- Note when meds are taken
- Note stress level; anxiety or feelings of depression
- Note your sleep cycle
- Go over medications with MD/NP
- Discuss s/e from treatment (anemia, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and pain) and the effect on your fatigue



Exercise

- Studies have shown that exercise can reduce cancer-related fatigue
- NCCN recommends:
 - start low intensity & duration; progress slowly & modify
 - 20-30 minutes 3-5 times a week
- *Greater than 1 hour/day showed to increase fatigue
- *Don't over do it!

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- Keep in mind any restrictions you may have when planning exercise:
neutropenic, low platelet counts, anemia
 - Always develop plan with MD/NP/PA approval



Energy conservation

- Strategies for energy conservation:

Plan naps/rest periods

Plan breaks after strenuous activities

Plan, delegate and prioritize



Sleep Disturbances/Insomnia

Create a sleeping environment:

- No TV
- Limit caffeine
- Keep bedtime schedule
- Bedtime routine
- Clear thoughts: meditate, journaling



Nutrition

- Eat small frequent meals: balanced meals to keep energy supply available
- Limit caffeine and sugar intake
- Work with MD/NP/PA to control nausea, vomiting & diarrhea

MOST IMPORTANT:



BRING IT UP!

Discuss your fatigue with your healthcare providers so you can work together to manage it.



Your CBC & Low Blood Counts

- CBC:

- White Blood Count

- Absolute Neutrophil Count

- Hemoglobin & Hematocrit

- Platelet

- All can drop or become low as a result of treatment and/or disease



Neutropenia and Infection

- Prolonged neutropenia increases the risk of infection
- Signs and Symptoms of infection
 - Temperature
 - Monitor 2x/day
 - $T > 100.5$
 - Shaking chills
 - Burning/pain with urination
 - Central venous catheter site
 - Red, draining, tender
- When in doubt...call your physician/NP/PA !!



“Neutropenic Precautions”

- Decrease risk of infection -
 - GOOD HANDWASHING !!!!!!!
 - Avoid large crowds
 - Good dental hygiene
 - Avoid UNCOOKED fruits and vegetables
 - Avoid constipation/straining
 - Do not take drugs which can mask a fever
 - Do not use any rectal preparations or take your temperature rectally



Anemia

■ Sign/Symptoms:

- Shortness of breath (at rest/exertion), pale skin, fatigue, headache

■ Treatment options:

- Epoetin alpha (Procrit)/darbepoetin alfa (Aranesp)
- Packed Red Blood Cell Transfusion



Thrombocytopenia

- Sign/Symptoms:
 - Bleeding, easy bruising, petechiae
- Treatment options:
 - Transfusions
- Interventions at home:
 - Avoid flossing; use soft toothbrush
 - Stay well hydrated and use stool softeners when needed
 - Avoid activities that increase fall risk
 - Report ANY s/s of bleeding to your MD/NP/PA