

# Managing Fatigue

**Cancer related fatigue is very common. It is unlike the day-to-day tiredness a busy person may feel. It is persistent & distressing, with exhaustion that interferes with usual functioning. Learning how to cope with cancer related fatigue can help people find a better quality of life.**

## Questions to consider

When you talk to your doctor about fatigue, you may want to ask some questions.

- What is causing the fatigue?
- Do I need a blood test to investigate the causes of the fatigue?
- Is there anything that I should avoid doing?
- What can help me to sleep better?
- When will I have more energy?
- Can a social worker or occupational therapist talk to me about help at home?
- What exercise or activity do you recommend?
- Can you refer me to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist who works with cancer patients?

## Strategies

### Exercise

- Referral to an accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) or physiotherapist for a safe and effective exercise program.
- Find an Exercise Physiologist near you
- Speak to your GP about a GP Management Plan for Medicare rebated visits.



## Resources *(click to follow link)*



### Audio

Cancer Council Podcast, Managing Cancer Fatigue

### Video

Fit to Thrive, Leukaemia Foundation

Cancer related fatigue and the role of exercise, Leukaemia Foundation

Cancer Related Fatigue, Dr Mike Evans

### Reading

Cancer-related fatigue – what it is, how it can affect you and how to manage it, Leukaemia Foundation

Exercise after a cancer diagnosis, Cancer Council

Dealing with Cancer related fatigue, Victorian Cancer Survivorship Centre

## Recording energy levels

Using an energy diary can allow you to track patterns and fluctuations in energy.

You can use it to:

- discuss with your treating team or Exercise Physiologist
- recognize windows of energy to plan tasks
- track improvement or deterioration in energy over time

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## Strategies

### The 5 P's

<b>Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Try keeping an energy diary (see last page for an example)</li><li>Choose your best time of day for each activity</li><li>Break larger tasks down into smaller stages</li><li>Don't do all your tiring activities in one go</li><li>Organise timing of tasks to avoid unnecessary trips e.g. up and down stairs</li><li>Concentrate on one activity at a time</li><li>Plan one thing you enjoy and some effective relaxation for each day</li></ul>
<b>Prioritize</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Make a list of tasks for the week/day. Ask ...</li><li>Does it need to be done today?</li><li>Does it all need to be done now? DELAY it?</li><li>Does it need to be done by me? DELEGATE it?</li><li>Does it need to be done at all? DUMP it?</li><li>Do I <b>want</b> to DO it?</li></ul>
<b>Pace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Avoid rushing – keep a moderate, sustainable pace</li><li>Stop and rest BEFORE becoming tired</li><li>Plan rests as part of the daily routine</li><li>Alternate active and quiet tasks throughout the day.</li><li>Try ½ today ½ tomorrow</li></ul>
<b>Posture</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Prevent “energy leaks” by maintaining a good posture</li><li>Sit rather than stand – utilize a chair/stool when working at the bench to prepare meals or do dishes</li><li>Use adapted equipment to save energy</li><li>Keep frequently used items in easy reach</li></ul>
<b>Permission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>‘Be kind to yourself’</li><li>Allow for bad days (but don't try to cram everything into your good days!)</li><li>Consider yourself from another perspective - ‘What allowances would you make for a friend?’</li><li>Instead of ‘I must...’ or ‘I need...’, try ‘I wish to...’ or ‘I choose to...’</li></ul>

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## Strategies

### SMART Goal setting

SMART is an acronym you can use to guide your goal setting. Each letter stands for an attribute that will help you refine your goal.

<b>S</b>	<b>Specific</b>	Define a clear, specific goal: What do you want to do?
<b>M</b>	<b>Measurable</b>	Make sure you can track progress: How will you know when you've achieved it?
<b>A</b>	<b>Actionable</b>	Actionable goals ensure the steps you can take to get there are within your control. What steps can you take to achieve your goal?
<b>R</b>	<b>Relistic / relevant</b>	Make sure the goal is not too hard and not too easy. Can you realistically achieve your goal? Is this goal worth working hard to accomplish? Will this goal meet your needs?
<b>T</b>	<b>Time based</b>	A date helps to remain focused When will this goal be accomplished? Set yourself a time/date for when you will achieve your goal

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## Strategies

### Sample energy diary

Rate your energy levels at any point during that 2-hour block

**0/10** = no energy at all **5/10** = energy levels are ok, not great, not bad **10/10** = full of energy

In each corresponding block, fill in what you are doing during that period of time i.e. sleeping, exercising, eating, commuting, watching TV, going to medical appointments, work, family time, volunteering, studying, socialising etc.

Time of day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
4 - 6am							
6 - 8am Rate your energy							
8 - 10am							
10am-Midday Rate your energy							
Midday - 2pm Rate your energy							
2 - 4pm							
4 - 6pm							
6 - 8pm Rate your energy							
8 - 10pm							
10pm - Midnight							
Midnight - 2am							
2 - 4am							