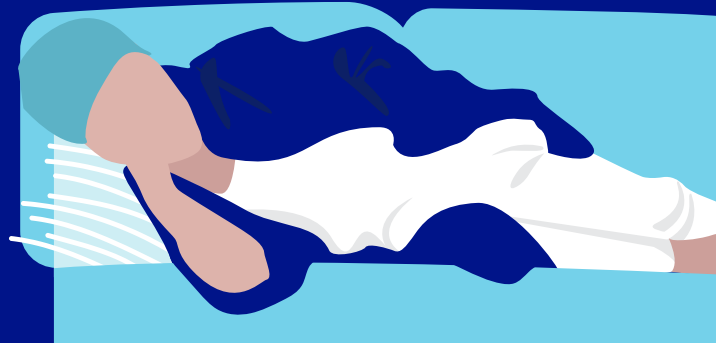


Fatigue series



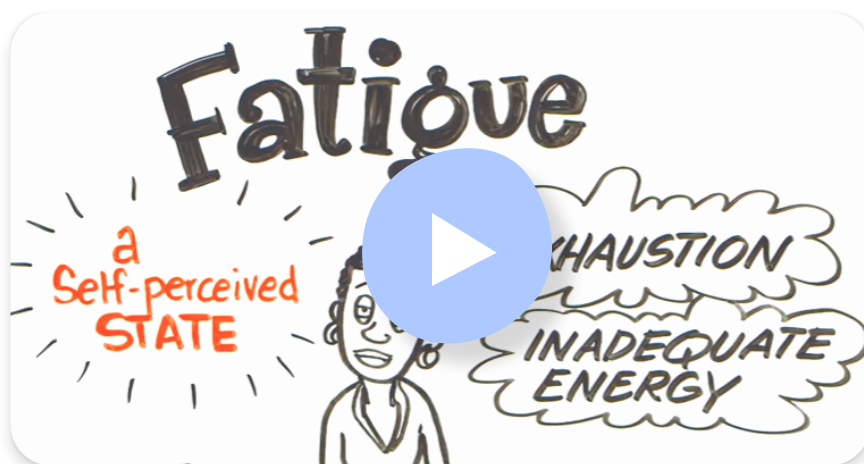
What is cancer-related fatigue (CRF)?

Cancer-related fatigue (CRF) is the most common side effect of blood cancer and treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

CRF is quite different from everyday tiredness and fatigue, where a good night's sleep means you feel energised and refreshed the next day.

Despite sleeping for lengthy periods, people with CRF often wake up feeling exhausted and don't have enough energy to face the things they need or want to do in their everyday life.

Here is a 10-minute video by Dr Mike Evans that describes the common experience of CRF.



Scan to watch the video if you have a printed copy of this handout



[Click here to watch the video](#)

? Consider the following questions:

- How did the video relate to your experience of fatigue?
- How does your cancer-related fatigue look across a typical week?
- In what ways does fatigue prevent you from doing things you enjoy or need to get done?
- What strategies do you use to manage fatigue?

Energy diary

To better understand your fatigue, it can be helpful to track your energy levels in a diary. An energy diary can be useful to:



Raise awareness of how your fatigue fluctuates over a day and week



Create habits that help you better manage fatigue



Understand the factors that can affect your fatigue levels



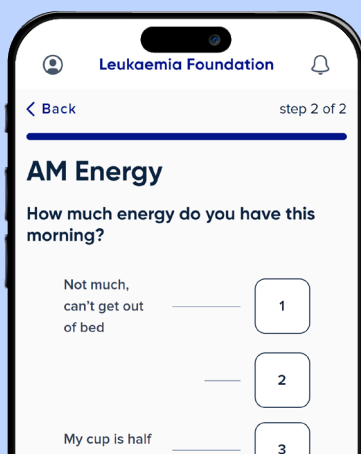
Create habits that help you better manage fatigue

You can find the printable energy diary in the appendix of this document

| Time | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|--------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|--------|
| 6 - 8 am | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 8 - 10 am | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 10 - 12 noon | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 12 - 2 pm | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 2 - 4 pm | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 4 - 6 pm | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 6 - 8 pm | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| 8 - 10 pm | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 | /0 |
| Comment | | | | | | | |

Leukaemia Foundation

Appendix 2



To complement your energy diary, try the Leukaemia Foundation's Digital Energy Coach.

It will help you see patterns, track trends, and offer personalised recommendations to manage fatigue.

Scan to learn more about how it can support your energy levels.



Strategies

Using **the 5 Ps** will help you use energy wisely to get the most out of each day.

Plan

- Try keeping an energy diary (see last page for an example)
- Choose your best time of day for each activity
- Break larger tasks down into smaller stages
- Don't do all your tiring activities in one go
- Organise timing of tasks to avoid unnecessary trips e.g. up and down stairs
- Concentrate on one activity at a time
- Plan one thing you enjoy and some effective relaxation for each day

Prioritize

- Make a list of tasks for the week/day
 - › Does it need to be done today?
 - › Does it all need to be done now? Delay it
 - › Does it need to be done by me? Delegate it
 - › Does it need to be done at all? Dump it
 - › Do i want to do it?

Pace

- Allow extra time for everything
- Aim for a moderate, sustainable pace
- Stop and rest before becoming tired
- Plan rests as part of the daily routine
- Alternate active and quiet tasks throughout the day
- Try ½ today and ½ tomorrow

Posture

- Prevent “energy leaks” by maintaining a good posture
- Sit rather than stand – utilize a chair/stool when working at the bench to prepare meals or do dishes
- Use adapted equipment to save energy
- Keep frequently used items in easy reach

Permission

- ‘Be kind to yourself’
- Allow for low energy days
- Avoid cramming everything into a good day
- Consider yourself from another perspective – ‘what allowances would you make for a friend?’
- Instead of ‘I must...’ or ‘I need...’, try ‘I wish to...’ or ‘I choose to...’

i Top tips from people with blood cancer:



Pay attention to emotional fatigue and adjust expectations / social commitments



Stay active and move daily – walk the dog / stretch / dance / qigong / bike ride



Keep a movement diary to remind you of what you have achieved and to motivate you



Know when you are at your most productive and do important tasks then



Use a meal service to stay nourished without having to cook each day



Start with the things you can do and work up from there

Modified borg scale

The modified borg scale is a numerical scale that ranges from 1 – 10. It asks you to rate the difficulty of your breathing. It can be used as a guide of intensity when exercising.

| | |
|------------|---|
| 1 | Very light activity Hardly any exertion, but more than sleeping, watching TV, etc. |
| 2-3 | Light activity Feels like you can maintain for hours, easy to breathe and carry on a conversation. |
| 4-6 | Moderate activity Breathing heavily but you can still hold a short conversation. Still somewhat comfortable, but becoming noticeably more challenging. |
| 7-8 | Vigorous activity Borderline uncomfortable, short of breath, can speak a sentence. |
| 9 | Very hard activity Very difficult to maintain exercise intensity, can barely breathe and speak only a few words |
| 10 | Maximal effort Feels almost impossible to keep going, completely out of breath, unable to talk, cannot maintain for more than a very short amount of time |



Goal setting

Setting goals can help you take control of your energy, focus on what matters most, and make daily life feel more manageable. Even small, realistic goals can provide structure, motivation, and a sense of achievement during your recovery.



An example of a SMART goal:

'I will be able to walk 3 laps around my block without stopping by the end of the month'

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.

| | | |
|----------|-------------------|---|
| S | Specific | Define a clear, specific goal: What do you want to do? |
| M | Measurable | Make sure you can track progress: How will you know when you've achieved it? |
| A | Achievable | Ensure that your goal is within reach and attainable. |
| R | Realistic | Your goal should be aligned to your current ability and long-term goals. |
| T | Time-bound | Set a reasonable timeframe in which to achieve your goal. This can help with motivation and accountability. |

Exercise

Research shows that exercise is beneficial in managing cancer related fatigue.

General tips on exercise:



Include aerobic (eg walking, bike riding, swimming) and strengthening exercises in your day. Start small and build. Something is better than nothing!



Exercise doesn't require expensive equipment or gym membership



Talk to your healthcare professional before starting exercise to manage safety considerations



Your energy levels will probably vary each day, so adjust your expectations to match e.g. you might plan a 30-minute walk but only feel able to walk for 10 minutes



Be realistic: if you can currently walk for 15 minutes, don't aim to complete a marathon in four weeks. Using the SMART goals can be helpful here.



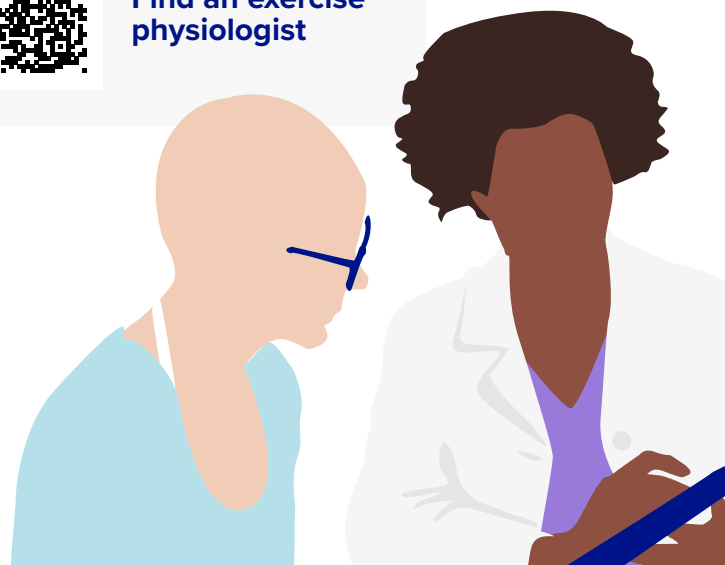
Help is available if you need guidance or don't know where to start. Find a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist here:



[Find a physiotherapist](#)



[Find an exercise physiologist](#)



Resources



Information about cancer related fatigue



Cancer Council
Fatigue and cancer



Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
Cancer related fatigue



Cancer Council
Managing cancer fatigue



Nutrition



Leukaemia Foundation
Eating well booklet



Dietitians Australia
Find an Accredited Practising Dietitian



Ways to measure fatigue



The Oncology Nursing Society
Brief fatigue inventory



Leukaemia Foundation
Digital energy coach



Managing sleep



ABC iView
Our brain - Episode 3, Recharged



Centre for Clinical Interventions
Looking after yourself



Exercise

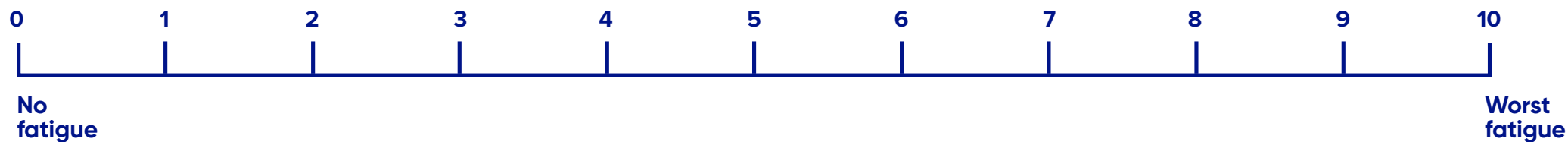


Leukaemia Foundation
Webinar - Get moving, keep motivated

Call the Leukaemia Foundation helpline on **1800 620 420** to speak to a Supportive Care Case Manager for individual support.

Energy diary: printable diary and homework

Fatigue: Each day rate your energy levels at any point during each two-hour block of that day using the scale below:



| Fatigue level | Rating range | Description example |
|------------------|--------------|---|
| Mild fatigue | 0 - 3 | A bit more tired than normal |
| Moderate fatigue | 4 - 6 | Noticeably tired. Able to do less/work less |
| Severe fatigue | 7 - 10 | Tired every day and needing to rest. Can't exercise/do daily activities |

Comments: In the comments section you can note anything else you noticed that day e.g. change in medication, changes to routine, life event, mood etc.

Week 1: Fill in what you are doing during each of the time blocks below e.g. resting, exercising, eating, commuting, watching tv, going to medical appointments, work, family time, volunteering, studying, socialising etc.

Week 2: Now we would like you to add how you are going with your **SMART** goals. **SMART** goals are:

- **Specific** – try not to be vague, make your goal clear and well-defined.
- **Measurable** – make sure you can measure your goal and progress towards that goal, so you know when you've achieved it.
- **Achievable** – ensure that your goal is within reach and attainable.
- **Realistic** – your goal should be aligned to your current ability and long-term goals.
- **Time-bound** – set a reasonable timeframe in which to achieve your goal. This can help with motivation and accountability.

Week 3: This week we've added a box about sleep. When commenting on your sleep, you can note things like the quality of your sleep, your bedtime and waking hours and / or anything you did (helpful / unhelpful) to affect your sleep quality e.g. turned off screens an hour before bed.

Week 1: Activity

| Time | Monday | | Tuesday | | Wednesday | | Thursday | | Friday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|----------------|--------|--|---------|--|-----------|--|----------|--|--------|--|----------|--|--------|--|
| 6 - 8 am | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 8 - 10 am | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 10 - 12 noon | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 12 - 2 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 2 - 4 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 4 - 6 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 6 - 8 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 8 - 10 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| Comment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Week 2: SMART goals

| Time | Monday | | Tuesday | | Wednesday | | Thursday | | Friday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|---------------------|--------|--|---------|--|-----------|--|----------|--|--------|--|----------|--|--------|--|
| 6 - 8 am | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 8 - 10 am | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 10 - 12 noon | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 12 - 2 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 2 - 4 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 4 - 6 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 6 - 8 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 8 - 10 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| Comment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sleep | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SMART goal 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SMART goal 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Week 3: Sleep

| Time | Monday | | Tuesday | | Wednesday | | Thursday | | Friday | | Saturday | | Sunday | |
|----------------|--------|--|---------|--|-----------|--|----------|--|--------|--|----------|--|--------|--|
| 6 - 8 am | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 8 - 10 am | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 10 - 12 noon | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 12 - 2 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 2 - 4 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 4 - 6 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 6 - 8 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| 8 - 10 pm | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | | /10 | |
| Comment | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sleep | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |