

Tips to manage cancer-related fatigue

Tips to help reduce cancer-related fatigue for people with advanced breast cancer (aBC), also referred to as metastatic breast cancer (mBC)

Fatigue is described as a feeling of tiredness or exhaustion. As many as 90% of people with cancer may feel fatigued at some time.¹

There are things you can do to manage fatigue caused by your cancer and the symptoms you might have. It's important to tell your doctor or nurse specialist if you think you might have fatigue,² so that they are fully aware of how you are feeling and can provide help for some of your symptoms.

Treating the causes of cancer-related fatigue could help to reduce tiredness.² Below is a checklist of simple actions you can take which will help you to balance your energy use, and minimise fatigue.



Plan ahead

- Try planning your day so that you have energy to do the things you want to do most.¹
- Use a diary to record when you feel best and when you feel the most tired. This may help you to plan your activities.¹
- Try to plan the bigger tasks for the time when you feel least tired.¹
- Pace yourself and plan rest periods.¹
- Plan your activities around your treatment, as you are likely to feel tired after receiving it.¹

Refuel

- Eating well and keeping at a healthy weight can help you to maintain your strength. It can also give you more energy.¹ Eating healthily can reduce your risk of heart problems, diabetes and even some cancers.¹
- Speak to your doctor or nurse specialist about what a good weight is for you, and if they would recommend referring you to a dietitian for more help with eating healthily.¹
- Keeping a diary of what and when you eat can help you see if you have more energy after certain meals.¹
- Drink plenty of fluids.¹
- You may like to try different foods or eat foods that take your fancy the most, as sometimes you may experience taste changes.¹
- To learn more, follow the link to the **Macmillan Cancer Support** website at the end of this document or talk to your doctor or nurse specialist who could refer you to a registered dietitian.²





Rest

- Your fatigue may make you feel like sleeping all the time, but it is important to try to keep to a normal sleep routine.¹
- Good-quality sleep may help reduce fatigue, and the need to sleep during the day.¹
- Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day and try not to sleep late into the day after a sleepless night, as this can disrupt your sleep pattern.¹
- Try to do gentle exercise like walking, as this can help you feel naturally tired and ready for bed.¹
- Keeping your brain focused on activities such as reading or puzzles can also help you feel naturally ready to sleep.¹
- Some people find that daytime naps help them sleep better at night, while others sleep less well after them – be aware of how you are affected by napping.¹ You should also try to limit daytime naps to no more than 20–30 minutes, so they don't interfere with your sleep at night.²
- Make sure that you stop taking caffeinated food or drinks (like coffee, tea and cola drinks) and alcohol at least 6 hours before going to sleep.²
- There are many things you can try to help regulate your sleep pattern and provide you with better quality sleep.³ You can visit **Macmillan Cancer Support** for more tips.



Talk

- Dealing with fatigue all the time can be very difficult and some people find it can affect their ability to cope. It could help to talk to someone close to you, such as a family member or friend, or you may prefer to talk to someone in your healthcare team.¹ If you find that your fatigue is affecting your feelings, talk to your healthcare team about how you can get additional support. They may refer you to a counsellor for extra help.^{1,2}
- Talk to your doctor or nurse specialist about fatigue related to your cancer diagnosis and/or treatment in the first instance, as they could help advise you on what to do first, and also put you in touch with some other people who could help further, such as specialist counsellors.¹
- Some people find it helps to talk to other people with fatigue, and you may find talking to other people at your hospital helpful, or you could join a local support group. Your healthcare team will be able to put you in touch with some local support groups.¹
- You can share your experiences, ask questions and get and give advice based on your experience by using online support groups. These include social networking sites, online forums, chat rooms and blogs. Some online communities you could connect with include **Macmillan Cancer Support** and **Breast Cancer Now**.



Get moving

- Physical activity can help reduce the symptoms of fatigue associated with your aBC (also referred to as mBC). Being active may help to improve your appetite, give you more energy and improve sleep.^{1,2}
- Physiotherapists can help tell you where to start so that you can find a realistic goal and so you don't end up overdoing it. They can help you plan an exercise programme that suits you.²
- It's important that you don't overdo it – you should work at your own pace.²
- Build up your exercise gradually.² Some exercise is always better than no exercise.¹
- It might help to set some simple goals, which could be walking from the front door to the back door. You can then try to do a little more activity each time, if you can.¹
- Make sure you drink plenty of water whenever you exercise, to prevent yourself from becoming dehydrated, as this can make you feel more fatigued.¹
- Always get advice from your doctor before starting any heavy exercise programme.¹
- You can find more tips on keeping active on the **Macmillan Cancer Support** and **Breast Cancer Now** websites.



Try complementary therapies

- There are some complementary therapies that may help with fatigue, like relaxation, massage therapy, acupuncture² and yoga.¹
- Many people feel that complementary therapies are supportive and can help you feel more in control of your health.¹
- Before you use a complementary therapy, you should talk to your doctor or specialist nurse, as some therapies may affect your cancer treatment.¹
- You can find out more about complementary therapies from **Breast Cancer Now**.

Visit these websites for advice on making decisions about work, taking time off and information on financial and emotional support:



At Breast Cancer Now we're here for anyone affected by breast cancer. Our breast cancer nurses, expertly trained staff and volunteers, and award-winning information make sure you can get the support you need to help you live well with the physical and emotional impact of breast cancer.

For breast cancer care, support and information, call us free on **0808 800 6000** or visit www.breastcancer.org



We're here to help everyone living with cancer live life as fully as they can, providing physical, financial and emotional support. So whatever cancer throws your way, we're right there with you.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call **0808 808 0000** or visit www.macmillan.org.uk

▼ This medicine is subject to additional monitoring. This will allow quick identification of new safety information. You can help by reporting any side effects you may get. See yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk for how to report side effects.

Reporting of side effects

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in the package leaflet. You can also report side effects directly via the Yellow Card Scheme at yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk.

By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.

References

1. Macmillan Cancer Support. Coping with fatigue (tiredness). Available at: https://cdn.macmillan.org.uk/dfsmedia/1a6f23537f7f4519bb0cf14c45b2a629/777-source/mac11664-e08-coping-with-fatigue?_ga=2.123987530.1547020553.1626438891-1026275342.1620816928&_gac=1.89711337.1625398020.CjwKCAjwulWHBhBDEiwACXQYsYtXJhNwLI_JFc6fqpkYijXilPwzQssmwZsV4Z2ZtqsG3KsurGxYGB0CSxIQAvD_BwE (Accessed November 2021).
2. Cancer Research UK. Managing and Treating Cancer Fatigue. Available at: <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/physically/fatigue/managing-treating-cancer-fatigue> (Accessed November 2021).
3. Macmillan Cancer Support. Trouble sleeping (insomnia). Available at: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/impacts-of-cancer/trouble-sleeping> (Accessed November 2021).