



Fatigue and cancer

Cancer Council



Easy English



Hard words



This book has some hard words.

The first time we write a hard word

- the word is in **blue**

- we write what the hard word means.

You can get help with this book



You can get someone to help you

- read this book

- know what this book is about

- find more information.



We will write contact information at the end of this book.

About this book



This book is from Cancer Council.



This book is about **fatigue** when you have **cancer**.

Fatigue is when you

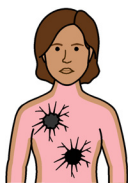
- feel very tired



- feel weak

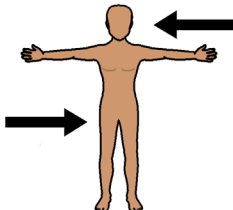


- have no energy.



Cancer is a disease that

- can grow in any part of your body

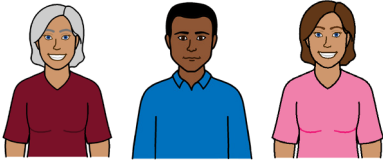


- can spread from one part of your body to other parts



- can make you sick.

What does fatigue feel like?



Fatigue

- happens a lot to people who have cancer



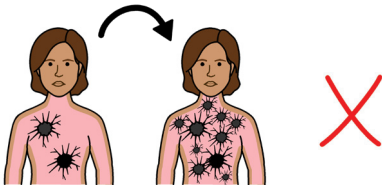
- is **not** the same as normal tiredness



- might **not** go away after rest or sleep



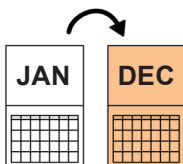
- can make your brain and body very tired.



Fatigue does **not** usually mean that your cancer has got worse.



People can feel fatigue in different ways.



How fatigue feels might change over time.



Signs of fatigue include

- **not** having a lot of energy



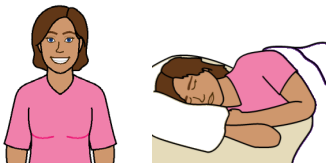
- sore muscles



- your body feeling weak or slow



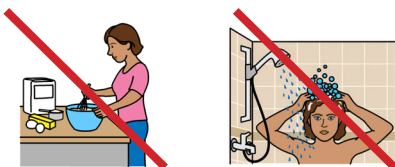
- finding it hard to think.



You might look well but still have fatigue.



Fatigue can be a very hard part of having cancer.



You might feel like it is very hard to do every day things when you have fatigue.



Fatigue can also make you feel

- sad



- frustrated

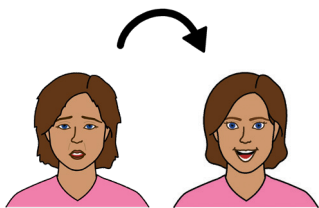


- lonely.

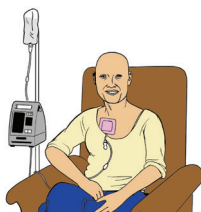


Talk to your doctor if these feelings do **not** go away.

How long will I have fatigue?

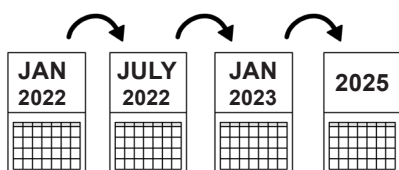
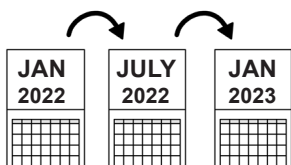


Fatigue usually gets better over time.



You might get fatigue

- while you are getting cancer treatment
- for 6 to 12 months after cancer treatment ends



- for a longer time.

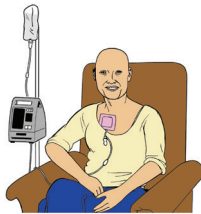


It might take a long time before you can do all your normal things again.

Why do I have fatigue?



Cancer can cause fatigue.

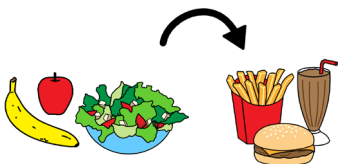


You might also get fatigue from

- having cancer treatments

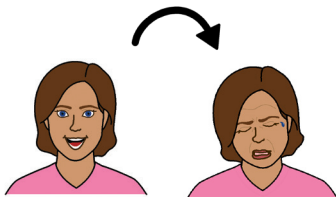


- **side effects** from cancer treatments, like pain.



Sometimes changes can cause fatigue, including

- changes to what you eat



- mood changes, like depression



- other health problems, like an infection.



Other things that can cause fatigue include

- stress



- bad sleep



- **not** doing enough exercise

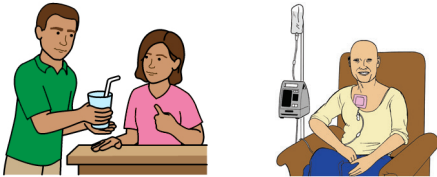


- medicine, for example to help with pain.

What can I do about fatigue?



You should talk to your doctor or nurse about your fatigue.



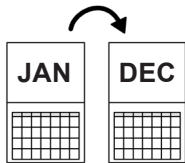
Support and treatment for fatigue should be part of your cancer care.



Tell your doctor or nurse

- how you feel

and



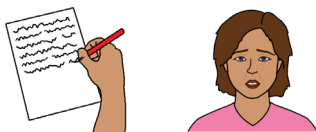
- how long you have had fatigue.



You can write down how you feel each day to see

- when you have energy

and



- when you feel fatigue the most.



The doctor or nurse might suggest tests to see

- what is causing your fatigue



- if they can treat what is causing your fatigue.



You might need to see a fatigue expert.

For example, at a fatigue clinic.

Exercise

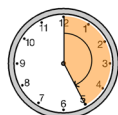


Exercise can help with fatigue even if you only do a little bit.



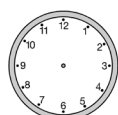
Talk to your doctor about

- what exercise is right for you



- how much exercise you can do

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT



- when to exercise.



1	_____
2	_____
3	_____
4	_____

You can get an exercise plan from an expert like a physiotherapist.

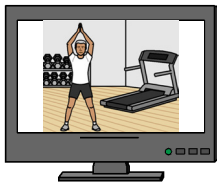


Ways to do some exercise include

- local exercise classes



- exercise groups for people with cancer



- free exercise videos from Cancer Council.

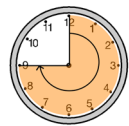
Sleep



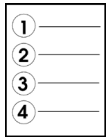
Fatigue might get worse if you

- have **not** had enough sleep

or



- have had too much sleep.



A good bedtime routine can help you sleep better.



You could

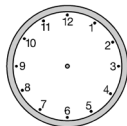
- do activities to relax, like breathing exercises



- try **not** to use computers, mobile phones or tablets before bed



- keep daytime naps short so you are tired at night.



Talk to your doctor or nurse about

- how much sleep you get

and



- other things that might help, like seeing a counsellor.

Planning your day

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

①	_____
②	_____
③	_____
④	_____

Planning your day can help when you have fatigue.

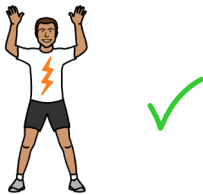
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____

When you plan your day you can

- set small goals that you can do



- have rest times in your day

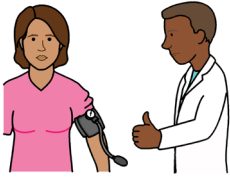


- do things when you feel best



- try **not** to have too many visitors.

Looking after yourself



Keeping healthy can also help with fatigue.



You should try to

- eat good food



- drink lots of water



- **not** drink alcohol



- stop smoking



- do things that make you happy



- do activities to help you relax.

Getting support



It is important to ask for help.

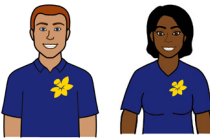


You can ask

- family, friends or neighbours



- your doctors and nurses



- a Cancer Council nurse.

Ask your social worker or local council about services to help you at home.

For example



- house cleaning



- cooking



- grocery shopping.

More information



Contact Cancer Council for

- cancer information

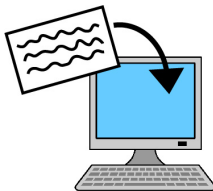
- support.



Call 13 11 20



Website cancervic.org.au



Email askanurse@cancervic.org.au

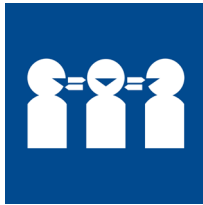
If you do not speak English



You can get cancer information in other languages on our website.



Website cancervic.org.au/languages



Contact Cancer Council through the Translating and Interpreting service or TIS.

Call 13 14 50



Ask the TIS to call 13 11 20.



If you need help to speak or listen use the National Relay Service.



Call 1800 555 660



Website

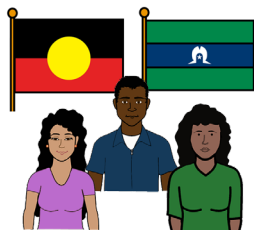
communications.gov.au/accesshub/nrs

Ask the relay officer to call 13 11 20.

Acknowledgement of Country



Cancer Council **respects** the **First Peoples of Australia.**



The First Peoples of Australia are the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Respect the First Peoples of Australia means we understand the importance of First Peoples

- culture

and

- history.

Acknowledgements

Cancer Council is Australia's peak non-government cancer control organisation. This fact sheet was funded by the Dry July Foundation.

This information is based on the expertise of clinicians who work in the area and consumer experience. We thank the reviewers of this fact sheet.

Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This fact sheet is intended as a general introduction and is not a substitute for professional medical, legal or financial advice. Information about cancer is constantly being updated and revised by the medical and research communities. While all care is taken to ensure accuracy at the time of publication, Cancer Council Australia and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this fact sheet.

This Easy English document was created by Scope (Aust) Ltd. in December 2022 using Picture Communication Symbols (PCS). PCS is a trademark of Tobii Dynavox, LLC. All rights reserved. Used with permission. This document must not be sold to third parties. The images must not be reused without permission. For more information about the images, contact Scope on 1300 472 673 or visit scopeaust.org.au