



Information for patients on Ribblesdale Ward

Fatigue

A guide on how to manage fatigue whilst in
hospital.

What is fatigue?

Fatigue is described as a lack of energy and motivation and can affect a person both physically and mentally. Fatigue is a common symptom for people with cancer and can be very disruptive to their lives.

What are the effects of fatigue?

Fatigue can cause many different symptoms and can vary from person to person. Some side effects include:

- Lack of energy
- Weakness
- Fatigability
- Effort, in relation to a task
- Sleepiness
- Tiredness
- Desire for rest
- Lack of motivation
- Boredom

Some people may feel too tired to eat, walk to the bathroom, or even use the TV remote. It can also sometimes be hard to think or move.

What are the causes of fatigue?

There are many things that can cause fatigue. Some of these are:

- The cancer itself
- Tests and investigations
- Treatments
- The emotional effects of cancer
- Poor appetite
- Symptoms of cancer such as pain, breathlessness, and fluid retention

The type of cancer you have and the stage you are at can also affect how fatigued you are feeling. If you have breast or prostate cancer your hormone levels could be affected leading to a side effect of fatigue.

Ways to manage your fatigue

There are ways to manage symptoms of fatigue, and this can help to reduce tiredness. It is important to tell your doctor or nurse if you feel you have symptoms of fatigue.

Planning your day

It is important to schedule your day so that you have time to do the activities you want to but also allow time for rest. Saving tasks for another day, asking others for help, and using gadgets and aids can help prevent you becoming fatigued when doing activities. It is important to remember not to do too much because you could become fatigued and be unable to do tasks later on in the day.

Diet

It is important to try to maintain your nutrition and hydration to give you energy. This can be difficult because cancer and cancer treatments can make you feel unwell. Eating smaller meals more often throughout the day and giving yourself more choice of foods could help you to eat more.

Exercise

Doing light to moderate exercise everyday can make you feel better, give you more energy, improve your appetite and help improve your mood. It is important that you listen to your body and know when your energy levels are too low for exercising.

Exercise could include walking around the ward (if you are able to), walking to the bathroom or completing leg exercises and stretches in bed. Start with light exercises that are not too strenuous for you, this will help you to avoid injury.

Sleep

Getting a good night sleep improves both your physical and mental health. Being well rested can replenish energy levels and help you cope better with the side effects and treatments of cancer.

Sleeping in hospital can be difficult due to disrupted sleeping pattern. This could be caused by lighting in the hospital being too light or dark, treatments and check-ups during the night, symptoms caused by your cancer treatment such as anxiety, pain and trouble breathing and many more. Some helpful tips to help you sleep better in hospital:

- Discuss with staff about your regular bedtime routine – try and replicate this whilst in hospital.

- Use earplugs and an eye mask to reduce noise and light.
- Avoid looking at phone screens an hour before you go to bed.

Emotional support

Cancer can affect you both physically and mentally and can heighten your emotions. Some of the common emotions you could feel are:

- Overwhelmed
- Anger
- Fear and worry
- Stress and anxiety
- Sadness and depression
- Guilt
- Loneliness

There are strategies that you can try to help you cope with your emotions these include looking for positives and things you enjoy, express how you are feeling but don't force yourself to talk about your cancer if you don't want to, be as active as you can but find time and ways to relax and look at what you can control in your day, for example setting a schedule for your day allows you to have more control of what you do.

Macmillan

MacMillan nurses can provide you with information about your cancer, treatment options and can discuss possible side effects and help you to

manage them. They can offer practical and emotional support for you and your family and friends.

Chaplain

A chaplain is there to listen to you; they provide emotional support and spiritual support to patients, relatives and friends. They can provide support during a crisis as well as through recovery. You don't have to be a practising believer to use this service.

Counsellor

Counselling can help with different problems you may face when you have cancer. These include how to cope with your reactions to cancer, family and relationship issues, exploring personal issues and dealing with practical issues. Research suggests that counselling can help you cope better with difficulties, reduce stress and improve quality of life.

Top 10 ways to manage your fatigue in hospital

1. Exercise as much as you are able.
2. Ask the nursing staff if you can use the adjustable height bath to help you to relax.
3. Prioritise your day, decide what the most important activities are for you to complete and do these first. Spread other activities out throughout the day to pace yourself and conserve energy.

4. Go off the ward with friends and family if you are able. You could visit the duck pond or any of our on-site restaurants and cafes.
5. Try to maintain your nutrition and hydration levels, this will give you more energy.
6. If you feel tired and sleepy, take frequent short naps throughout the day.
7. You don't have to struggle in silence. Someone is always there for you to talk to about how you are feeling.
8. Try to change into your own clothes rather than wearing hospital pyjamas to maintain a day-to-day routine.
9. Use the day rooms to have some time away from your bed to relax, watch TV, talk to friends and relatives or carry out daily activities.
10. Ask your friends and family to bring in activities you enjoyed doing at home to keep your day-to-day routine for example knitting, books to read, your iPad on or a crossword.

Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please contact Ribblesdale Ward 01772 522925

Sources of further information

www.macmillan.org.uk

www.cancerresearchuk.org

www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

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