



Fatigue is the most common side effect of cancer treatment. The cause of cancer treatment-related fatigue is not fully known. A low red blood cell count, which is called anemia is one cause. However, your blood count can be normal and you still may feel fatigued. Other factors can include sleep disruption, pain, stress and not eating properly.

When is fatigue a concern after chemotherapy?

The bone marrow’s production of red blood cells maybe lowered by chemotherapy. Red blood cells carry oxygen to the tissues in your body as needed for energy. When the red blood cell count is low, it is called anemia. When you have anemia you can feel fatigued.

What are the signs of anemia?

- » Tiredness
- » Weakness
- » Dizziness
- » Shortness of breath
- » Lack of energy
- » Feeling drained
- » Not feeling like yourself

What can you do to help fatigue?

- » Report these symptoms to your doctor or nurse.
- » Plan your activities, rest as needed.
- » Take short walks or do light exercise. Sometimes staying in bed over a long time can slow you down and make you feel more tired. Try to balance activity and rest.
- » Limit your activities, do the things that are most important to you.
- » Change positions slowly to avoid getting dizzy. Move from a lying position to a sitting position then after a few minutes to a standing position.
- » If possible, eat a well-balanced diet. This will help if you have anemia.
- » Ask your family and friends to help out.
- » Call your doctor if you have a loss of balance, fall, have a problem catching your breath or have a sudden increase in your fatigue.

Call your health care provider if:

- » You develop persistant nausea/vomiting, not relieved by nausea medicine and lasting more than 24 hours.
- » You develop constipation or diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours.
- » You develop soreness or coating of the mouth.
- » You have any signs of infection such as fever, chills, night sweats, burning on urination, cough or sore throat.
- » You feel tired, dizzy or become short of breath.
- » You notice that you are bruising easily or if you notice small red spots under your skin.
- » You have unusual bleeding from the nose or gums.
- » You have pain not relieved by pain medicine or your have new pain problems.
- » You notice swelling or puffiness of your face, hands, feet or abdomen.
- » You have numbness or tingling in your hands or your feet.
- » You have trouble sleeping.
- » You are having problems with your skin (rash, dryness, itching).
- » You are experiencing anything that you think is abnormal for you.
- » When calling the doctor’s office, be sure to let the person answering the phone know the reason for calling so that problems can be handled in an appropriate manner.