Using Exercise to Fight Cancer-Related Fatigue

Cancer-related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer and cancer treatment. This type of fatigue is very different than feeling tired from everyday life. It can last for long periods of time and may not be relieved with sleep or rest.

Regular exercise several times a week can help fight fatigue, boost your energy level, relieve stress and tension, make your muscles stronger and help you sleep better.

Walking, bicycling, swimming, dancing and strength training are all examples of exercise. Mind and body exercises such as qigong, tai chi, and yoga may also help relieve fatigue.

Before You Start an Exercise Program

Check with your doctor before starting an exercise program. It is important to know if it is safe for you to exercise. Ask your doctor about any special precautions you should follow. The kind of exercise you do and how often you exercise will depend on your health condition and treatment plan.

Exercise Safety

- Pick exercises that match your fitness level.
- Pace your activities during the day and plan for rest between daily activities.
- Eat well-balanced meals and drink plenty of non-caffeinated fluids during the day.
- Do not overdo it - know your limits when doing exercises.
• Do not exercise if you are not feeling well.
• If you become very tired when exercising you may need to reduce your activity time.
• **Talk with your doctor about the safety of exercise if you have any of the following:**
  - Low white blood cell count
  - Low platelet count
  - Low red blood cell count (anemia)
  - Cancer that has spread to the bones
  - Infection or fever
  - Numbness in your feet or problems with balance
• It may be helpful to ask your doctor about working with a physical therapist.

**Important Information**

**You should STOP exercising and rest if you feel:**
• Dizzy or lightheaded
• Short of breath
• Chest pain or pressure in your chest
• Nausea or vomiting
• Pain that does not go away
• Abnormal pulse or heart beat

**If you have any of these symptoms, stop the exercise and rest. Get medical help if your symptoms do not go away.**

**More Information**

For more information on this topic, see the patient education handouts:
• [Cancer Therapy Managing Side Effects - Fatigue](#)
• [The Do’s and Don'ts of Exercise](#)
• [Tips for a Successful Exercise Program](#)