Fight Cancer-Related Fatigue with Good Nutrition

Cancer-related fatigue is one of the most common side effects reported by people in cancer treatment. This kind of fatigue is very different than feeling tired as a result of everyday life. There are many reasons why cancer and its treatment may cause fatigue. Improving your nutrition is a way to help fight cancer-related fatigue. Here are tips for you and your caregiver.

Energy-Saving Ideas

If possible, try to plan meals and snacks in advance. Use foods that are already prepared and just need heated for at least one meal of the day. For example, you can buy frozen dinners, or take-out foods. Another idea is to use a meal preparation company to make meals ahead of time to heat and eat. Other tips are:

- Eating foods that do not need to be chewed a lot saves energy. Examples are casseroles, egg dishes, pastas and meal replacement drinks such as Boost and Ensure.
- Use colorful, disposable paper plates, napkins and cups to serve meals. This reduces clean-up work and brightens a mealtime.
- Consider using community resources that are available like Meals on Wheels or a community center’s lunch program.
- Use the help of family and friends for shopping, cooking and meal preparation. Plan this in advance for a few times a week.
- Plan ahead for treatment days, especially if you will have waiting time. Pack snacks that are in individual packages such as wrapped cheese, granola bars or fruit juice to take with you.
**Nutrition-Boosting Ideas**

- Eat the largest meal of the day at breakfast when you are rested and have energy to eat. Use high calorie and high protein foods such as:
  - Eggs, ham and cheese in an omelet
  - Yogurt, fruit and whole milk blended for a milkshake or smoothie
  - Peanut butter on toast
  - French toast or pancakes with butter and syrup
- Try eating 5 to 6 small meals each day instead of 3 large meals. Use supplements like Boost, Ensure or Carnation Instant Breakfast as a mini-meal or snack.
- Use pasteurized egg products like Egg Beaters®, to enrich milkshakes and puddings. You can also use these to make eggnogs, custards and omelets.
- Add canned meats to packaged rice, potato or macaroni and cheese mixes. This adds calories and protein. Examples are tuna, chicken, turkey or ham. You can add these meats to macaroni and cheese or to packaged noodle or rice dishes.
- Plan some light activity before and after eating. This helps increase your appetite and helps with food digestion. Avoid lying down immediately after a meal to help prevent heartburn and indigestion.

**For more information:**

Please ask for other patient education handouts on Cancer-related fatigue to learn about other ways to help reduce fatigue.