

Asthenia (fatigue)

What is asthenia?

The most common complaint reported by cancer patients is a condition known as asthenia (as-THÉE-nee-uh), which is a medical term for fatigue. However, this condition may feel different from the fatigue you experienced before developing cancer. Some patients may experience physical, mental, or emotional fatigue for days, weeks, or months, that is not relieved by rest. The fatigue will go away gradually after treatment is completed.

What causes asthenia/fatigue?

Fatigue may result from cancer treatments or from the disease itself; however, the cause is not fully understood. Poor sleep, pain or pain medications, stress, poor diet, or low red blood cell count (anemia) may also lead to fatigue.

How can I cope with asthenia/fatigue?

- Plan to rest a little each day with breaks or short naps that will not disturb your sleep at night
- Keep a daily diary and note your energy levels after your cancer treatments. This can help you with scheduling important activities
- Allow others to help you with your daily errands, and save your energy for the important things
- Discuss any sleep problems with your doctor or nurse
- Limit your intake of caffeine and alcoholic drinks
- Balance your diet and drink plenty of water, unless given other instructions by your doctor or nurse
- Exercise lightly or take short walks, if your doctor approves
- Consider doing activities you enjoy, but do them more easily or for less time
- Activities that may help fatigue include meditation, prayer, yoga, guided imagery, and visualization

Name: _____

Institution/Group: _____

Phone: _____

Notes: _____

Talk to your doctor or nurse about appropriate ways to deal with your fatigue, and inform them of any worsening in your energy level.

The information contained herein is not comprehensive and is intended only as a guide.