

疲倦（疲勞）與癌症

本資訊是關於疲勞。疲勞的意思是非常疲倦。可以是由於癌症或癌症治療所引致。

若您對此資訊有任何疑問，請詢問您正在接受治療的醫院的醫生或護士。

您也可於每日上午 8 時至晚上 8 時，致電麥克米倫癌症援助機構（Macmillan Cancer Support），電話：**0808 808 0000**。我們有傳譯員，所以您可以使用您自己的母語與我們交談。當您致電我們時，請以英文告訴我們您所需要的語言。

如果您想以其他語言進一步瞭解癌症，請瀏覽 macmillan.org.uk/translations

本資訊主要介紹：

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甚麼是疲勞

疲勞是指大部分或全部時間都感到非常疲倦。這是癌症患者的常見問題。癌症患者的疲勞有時被稱為癌症相關疲勞或 CRF。

癌症引起的疲勞不同於非癌症患者的疲勞。癌症患者在活動後可能會更快感到疲勞。休息或睡覺無助於緩解疲勞。

對大多數人來說，疲勞會在治療結束後好轉。但對有些人來說，疲勞可能會持續數月甚至數年。

疲勞的影響

疲勞會以不同的方式影響您。疲勞的一些常見影響包括：

- 難以做簡單的事情，如梳頭或穿衣
- 感覺沒有精力或體力
- 難以集中注意力和記住事物
- 思考、說話或作決定有困難
- 輕微活動後感到呼吸困難
- 頭暈或頭昏
- 難以入睡（失眠）或睡得比平時多
- 對性失去興趣
- 比平時更情緒化。

當你大部分時間都感到疲倦時，你會感到沮喪和不知所措。告訴醫生和護士您的感受很重要。他們可能有辦法幫助您。您自己也可以做些事情來幫助自己。例如，積極鍛煉身體可以緩解疲勞。

甚麼會導致疲勞？

我們還不完全清楚癌症相關疲勞的原因。可能有很多原因。可能是由以下原因造成：

癌症

對某些人來說，癌症可能會導致疲勞。

有些癌細胞會刺激腹部內膜。這會導致腹部積液過多。腹腔積液過多稱為腹水。腹水會引起不適和疲勞。

您可能會感到疲倦，因為癌症減少了體內紅血球的數量。細胞是構成我們身體器官及組織的微小組成部分。紅血球數量減少稱為貧血。

荷爾蒙是人體製造的一種物質，可以控制器官如何運作。有些癌症，如乳癌和前列腺癌，會改變人體內的荷爾蒙水平。這種變化會影響人體消耗能量的方式，並可能導致疲勞。

癌症可能會影響體內細胞因子的水平。細胞因子是一種蛋白質。它們有助於控制細胞的某些功能。細胞因子可能有參與導致癌症相關的疲勞。

癌症治療

醫生仍在研究癌症治療為何會導致疲勞。可能是因為以下原因：

- 身體需要額外的能量來修復和愈合
- 癌細胞被摧毀後化學物質會積聚
- 人體免疫系統受到影響

以下癌症治療方法可能會讓您感到疲倦：

- **手術** -- 手術是透過切除全部或部分癌腫瘤來治療癌症的一種方法。這也被稱為施手術。很多人在手術後會感到疲倦。通常幾週後就會好轉。暫時避免做太多事情。手術前您可能會焦慮不安，睡眠不好。有些止痛藥會讓您感到疲倦。
- **化療和放射治療** -- 化療是一種使用藥物殺死癌細胞的癌症治療方法。放射治療是一種癌症治療方法，它使用高能射線（如 X 射線）來殺死癌細胞。這些治療會導致疲勞。疲勞通常會在治療結束後 6 到 12 個月得好轉。但有時會持續更長時間。有時，這些治療可能會造成長期影響，如呼吸困難（不舒服或呼吸急促）或心臟問題。這些可能會讓您感覺更加疲倦。化療和放射治療還可能導致貧血。
- **荷爾蒙療法** -- 一種透過影響體內荷爾蒙發揮作用的癌症治療方法。其中一些療法可能會導致疲勞。
- **標靶治療** -- 一種使用標靶藥物攻擊癌細胞的癌症治療方法。其中一些療法可能會導致疲勞。
- **免疫療法** -- 免疫系統保護人體免受疾病和感染的侵害。免疫療法是利用免疫系統發現和攻擊癌細胞的治療方法。其中一些療法可能會導致疲勞。

貧血

貧血是指紅血球數量過少。紅血球中含有一種叫做血紅蛋白（Hb）的蛋白質，它能在體內攜帶氧氣。如果紅血球數量不足，身體獲得的氧氣量就會減少。這會令你感到疲倦。如果您患有貧血症，您還會感覺到：

- 呼吸困難
- 眩暈和頭暈
- 胸悶

化療或放射治療可能會導致貧血。您的醫生可以檢查您是否患有貧血症。如果您確實患有貧血，您可能需要接受治療來使自己感覺好些。

飲食問題

如果您的進食量與正常情況下不一樣，可能會導致您精力不足並感到疲倦。有些人即使吃很多，體重也會減輕。這是因為癌症對身體的影響。如果您進食有困難，一定要告訴護士或醫生。

如果您感到噁心且無法進食，醫生可能會給您處方一些藥物來幫助您。如果您不能服用治療惡心的藥物，或因嘔吐而無法進食，請告訴您的醫生或護士。還有其他服用抗噁心藥物的方法。

疼痛

疼痛會導致疲勞。如果您有疼痛，止痛藥和其他治療方法可以幫助緩解疼痛。如果疼痛得到緩解，也會有助於緩解疲勞。

其他醫療問題

其他疾病也可能會加重疲勞。如果您正在服用治療其他疾病的藥物，這些藥物有時也會令您感到疲勞。影響疲勞的其他疾病包括：

- 糖尿病 -- 由於身體無法正確利用血糖而導致血液中糖含量過高的疾病。
- 甲狀腺問題 -- 甲狀腺是頸部的一個腺體。它製造荷爾蒙，幫助控制身體機能。
- 心臟問題 -- 如心臟衰竭。

睡眠問題

患有癌症時出現睡眠問題是很常見的。睡眠對以下各方面很重要：

- 身體健康
- 情緒健康
- 恢復精力
- 集中力和記憶力

長期睡眠不好（失眠）會導致疲勞、情緒低落和不能集中注意力。

癌症對情緒的影響

癌症對情緒的影響可導致疲勞。一個人在患上癌症時會有不同的情緒。您可能會感到擔憂、悲傷或憤怒。感受沒有對錯之分。

您可能會發現不同類型的情緒支援，包括談話療法和輔助療法，對您有所幫助。

接受疲勞的診斷

在治療疲勞之前，對疲勞進行適當的評估非常重要。如果您在任何時候感到疲勞，請告訴您的醫療團隊成員。

癌症醫生、專科護士或全科醫生會向您詢問一些有關疲勞的問題。或者，他們可能會使用一份問卷，詢問您的癌症情況、您的感覺以及您如何應對日常活動。

您的醫生會檢查導致疲勞的原因，如貧血，以及可進行的治療方法。他們可能會對您進行檢查和驗血。他們還可能會檢查您正在服用的藥物，看看調整這些藥物是否有幫助。

獲得關於疲勞的幫助

治療疲勞的藥物

目前還沒有任何藥物可以幫助預防或改善疲勞。類固醇藥物有時會有所幫助。但這些藥物可能會有副作用，因此您應該諮詢醫生這些藥物是否適合您。

進行研究試驗是為了找到新的更好的藥物治療方法。這包括治療疲勞的藥物。現在很多醫院都參與這些試驗。向醫生查詢您是否可以參加治療疲勞的研究試驗。

獲得支援

您的醫療團隊成員可以幫助您應對疲勞：

- **癌症醫生或全科醫生** -- 可以幫助找出導致疲勞的原因和應對疲勞的方法。
- **臨床專科護士** -- 可以評估並提供有關應對疲勞的實用方法的資訊和支援。例如，您居住地附近是否有任何支援團體或活動（如運動班）。
- **物理治療師** -- 可以就鍛煉和活動提供建議。他們可以幫助您應對呼吸困難等其他症狀。
- **職業治療師** -- 可以提供資訊、支援和輔助工具，幫助您進行日常活動，如洗滌和穿衣。
- **社會工作者** -- 可以幫助您解決實際和經濟問題。他們可以幫助安排照顧者在您家中提供幫忙。
- **心理輔導員** -- 可以傾聽您的心聲，幫助您解決任何煩惱或憂慮。

應對疲勞的方法

您可以採取不同的方法來應對疲勞。其中一些方法有可能有助減輕疲勞。另一些方法則可以幫助您更好地應對。

未雨綢繆

如果您感到疲勞，未雨綢繆很重要。這有助確保您仍然可以做最想做的事情。例如，您可以：

- 用日記記錄自己感覺最好的時候和最疲倦的時候
- 嘗試在你可能感覺不那麼疲倦的時候計劃更重要的任務
- 在活動一段時間後，計劃足夠的休息時間。

確保照顧好自己的需要，即使您還要考慮其他人的需要。

健康飲食與體重

- 吃得好和保持健康的體重有助增強你的能量。如果您食欲不振或有其他進食問題，請諮詢醫院的營養師。他們是食物和營養方面的專家。他們可以為您提供最佳的飲食建議。
- 如果您的口味發生變化，請嘗試不同的食物或吃最適合您口味的食物，直到情況好轉。
- 饑餓時，請確保要吃得好。時刻都盡量多喝水。
- 記錄每天的飲食和時間。這樣您就能知道吃了某些食物後是否更有精力。

體能活動

如果您感到疲勞，可能會變得較不活躍。如果肌肉不經常使用，就會變弱。體能活動有助於減輕疲勞。多運動有助於：

- 增進食欲 -- 這是指你感覺想吃東西的時候
- 為您提供更多能量
- 增強肌肉力量
- 改善睡眠。

在開始進行任何體能活動或增加運動量之前，請務必諮詢專業醫護人員的建議。他們可以對您可以安全進行的運動類型和運動量提供建議。癌症專科醫生或全科醫生也可以將您轉介給物理治療師。物理治療師可以幫助您增強體質和肌肉力量。某些地區可能有專門的癌症物理治療師。

保持活躍的小貼士

- 如果您感到不適、疼痛或有任何其他您擔憂的症狀，如呼吸困難，請不要進行運動。如果您有這種感覺，請告知您的全科醫生或癌症醫生。
- 為自己設定簡單可行的目標。盡量不要操之過急。
- 每天安排一些活動。例如，如果可以的話，步行去商店而不是開車。
- 嘗試一些有規律的、溫和的運動，如散步。或做一些簡單的增強體質的運動，如行樓梯。
- 做一些自己喜歡的事情，如園藝。

睡眠

您的疲勞可能會令您時刻都想睡覺。但保持睡眠規律很重要。每晚盡量睡 6 至 8 小時。優質睡眠有助消除疲勞。還可以減少白天的睡眠需要。

改善睡眠的小提示：

- 每天在差不多相同的時間睡覺和起床。
- 熬夜後盡量不要睡到很晚。這會導致睡眠模式紊亂。
- 嘗試做散步等溫和的運動。這能讓你感覺自然疲倦，為睡眠做好準備。
- 閱讀、遊戲或拼圖等活動可令您集中思考。這也能讓你自然地準備入睡。
- 注意小睡對你的影響。有些人發現白天小睡有助晚上睡得更好。有些人則在午睡後睡得不好。
- 嘗試睡前放鬆做一些例行活動。洗溫水澡或淋浴、閱讀或聽舒緩的音樂可能會有所幫助。
- 類固醇會導致睡眠問題。如果您正在服用類固醇，請諮詢醫生是否可以在每天的較早時間服用。
- 酒精和咖啡因會令您無法入睡。盡量少喝酒。接近睡時避免攝入咖啡因。

情緒支援

心理輔導

疲勞會影響您的情緒。疲勞會令你感到更加焦慮或情緒低落。如果您有情緒問題，您可能發現心理輔導很有幫助。心理輔導師受過傾聽訓練。他們可以幫助您處理困難的情緒。

很多醫院都有受過專門培訓的心理輔導師，為癌症患者提供情緒支援。您的癌症醫生或專科護士可以告訴您可以獲得哪些服務。他們也可以為您轉介。有些全科醫生的診所也有心理輔導師，或者他們可以為您轉介。

您可能需要為使用某些心理輔導師付費。

支援團體

一些人會覺得與其他有過疲勞經歷的人交談會有所幫助。英國大多數地方都有支援團體。有時由專業醫護人員帶領。小組的其他成員可能與您的情況類似。

您可以致電麥克米倫援助熱線 **0808 808 00 00** 查找您所在地區的支援團體。我們也可以嘗試查找是否有與您使用相同語言的支援團體。

網上支援

許多人在互聯網上獲得支援。癌症患者網上支援團體包括：

- 社交網站
- 論壇
- 聊天室
- 網誌。

您可以利用它們來提出問題、獲得支援和發表建議。Macmillan Online Community 是一個網上癌症論壇，您可以在這裡與他人交流並分享您的體驗。有很多不同的小組。例如，我們有以下小組：

- 特定癌症類型
- 家人和朋友
- LGBTQ+ 人士
- 實際問題。

輔助療法

輔助療法是可以令你感覺更好的活動。它們不能治療癌症。但它們可以幫助您應對癌症症狀或癌症治療的副作用。

有不同的輔助療法可以幫助緩解疲勞，例如：

- 放鬆技巧 -- 這是一種輔助療法，可以平靜心情，緩解肌肉緊張。
- 按摩療法 -- 一種利用觸摸和輕柔的壓力來緩解緊張的輔助療法。
- 瑜伽 -- 一種使用輕柔拉伸、深呼吸和運動的鍛煉方式。

在使用輔助療法之前，請諮詢您的專科醫生或護士。某些療法可能會影響您的癌症治療。

其中一些療法在國民醫療服務系統（NHS）中提供。您的全科醫生可以為您提供更多資訊。您也可以透過癌症支持小組獲得這些治療。

為了確保安全，一定要檢查治療師的資格和為癌症患者提供治療的人的經驗。如果您在這方面需要幫助，請諮詢您的醫生或護士，或致電麥克米倫援助熱線 **0808 808 0000**。

管理每天活動的小提示

如果您在家裡需要幫助，您可以向家人、朋友和鄰居求助。擁有一個支援網絡會帶來很大的不同情況。您的家人和朋友可能沒有意識到您有多麼需要幫助。或者他們可能正在等待你尋求幫助。

您可以做一些事情來幫助完成日常任務。

料理家務

- 將任務分散在一週內完成。每天做一點家務，而不是一次做很多。
- 如果可能，請其他人做園藝等重活。
- 如果可以，坐下來做一些事情。

購物

- 購物前列出一份清單，以免浪費精力和時間。
- 如果可能，與朋友或家人一起去購買雜貨，以獲得額外幫助。
- 大多數大型超市都提供網上購物服務，可以送貨上門。
- 使用購物手推車，這樣您就不需要提著沈重的籃子。帶有輪子的購物袋可以幫助您購物和把東西帶回家。
- 在不太繁忙的時候購物。
- 請店員幫忙打包和把雜貨搬上車。

準備膳食

- 在感覺不那麼疲倦的時候，多準備一些飯菜或雙份飯菜，然後冷凍起來，以備不時之需。
- 嘗試在最疲倦的時候吃即食的餐點。
- 如果可以，坐下來準備膳食。

洗滌和穿衣

- 如果可以，坐在浴缸內而不是站著淋浴。這可能有助於減少消耗能量。
- 淋浴時坐下，避免站立太久。職業治療師可以為您提供淋浴座椅。
- 穿容易穿脫下的衣服。
- 坐下來穿衣服。

職業治療師

職業治療師幫助行動不便或做日常工作有困難的人。他們可能會到您家中探望、幫助您找到更方便做事的方法。癌症醫生、專科護士或全科醫生可以將您轉介給職業治療師。

育兒

如果您有家人，您可能會發現在應對疲勞的同時很難照顧他們。當您無法進行通常的家庭活動時，可能會感到心煩意亂。您可以做一些事情，使照顧孩子變得更容易：

- 向孩子們解釋您經常感到疲倦，因此不能像以前那樣和他們一起做很多事情。
- 和他們一起計劃一些可以坐著進行的活動。比如棋盤遊戲或拼圖。
- 盡量安排在孩子們玩耍時有地方讓您坐下的活動。
- 避免抱小孩。使用嬰兒車或嬰兒手推車。
- 嘗試讓孩子參與一些家務勞動。
- 尋求並接受家人和朋友的幫助。

駕駛

如果您感到非常疲倦，駕駛可能會很困難和危險。您的警覺性可能低於正常水平，也無法集中注意力。反應時間也會縮短。以下小提示可能會對您有所幫助：

- 如果感覺非常疲勞，請不要開車。
- 如果可能，請家人或朋友開車送您。
- 如果您需要去醫院覆診，請詢問護士或醫生是否有醫院接送服務。
- 如果感覺自己在開車時睡著了，請在安全的地方停車休息。盡量避免在道路最繁忙的時候開車。

應對工作時的疲勞

您可能會發現疲勞會影響您的工作方式。

任何癌症患者都受到《2010年平等法》的保護。這意味著僱主不能不公平對待癌症患者。這也意味著僱主應在工作中作出合理調整，為癌症患者提供支援。合理調整是指僱主可以對你的工作進行改變，使你能夠繼續工作或重返工作崗位。保護人們免受歧視的法律規定，在某些情況下，僱主必須作出這些改變。

如果您想繼續工作，請坦誠地與您的上司討論如何讓您的工作不會令您感到太疲倦。這是合理調整的一部分。變化可能包括：

- 定期休息或小睡 -- 您可能會發現這在活動或飯後很有用
- 盡可能在家工作
- 避免體力勞動
- 在精力充沛時計劃工作。

使用「疲勞日記」可以幫助您瞭解自己在哪些日子或時間最疲倦。這可以幫助您決定何時最適合工作或休息。

向同事解釋疲勞的影響也有助您控制工作時的疲勞。有些人可能很難理解您有多疲倦，尤其是當您看起來很好的時候。

您可能會覺得向就業和養老金部門諮詢有所幫助。他們可以向您介紹您可能有的福利。

有關福利的更多資訊，請參閱我們的「財務支援 -- 福利」的資料單張，網址為 macmillan.org.uk/translations

照顧疲勞的人

許多人都會為患有疲勞症的家人、伴侶、朋友或鄰居提供支援。照顧疲勞患者有很多含義。例如：幫助進行個人護理、提供交通或安排約會。

如果您正在照顧疲勞患者，您可以做很多簡單的事情來幫助他們：

- 承認疲勞難以承受。
- 使用疲勞日記制定計劃。這將幫助你們瞭解疲勞患者何時有精力做事。
- 嘗試幫助你照顧的人多活動，或改變他們的飲食習慣，幫助他們減輕疲勞。

您也可以陪伴您照顧的人一起去醫院看病。您可以幫助他們向醫療團隊解釋疲勞對你們的影響。您還可以向他們展示患者的疲勞日記，並就您還可以做些甚麼事情來提供幫助徵求他們的意見。

妥善照顧自己

當您照顧別人時，照顧自己也很重要。確保您能及時預約自己的健康檢查。這包括您需要接種的任何疫苗，如流感疫苗。如果您需要定期服藥，請務必準備好藥品。

如果您需要照顧他人，您可以要求地方議會的成人社會服務部門瞭解您的需求，看看可為您提供甚麼幫助。這稱為照顧者評估。

以下小提示可能會有所幫助：

- 如果您的飲食或睡眠出現問題，或有難言的感受，或覺得難以應對，請告訴您的全科醫生。
- 接受他人的幫助或尋求幫助。
- 確保有時間休息放鬆。做一些自己喜歡的事情，如閱讀、散步或吃飯。
- 盡量吃健康的食物，坐下來吃飯。
盡量每天走出家門，做一些溫和的運動，如散步。這可以幫助您減輕疲倦和壓力。

您可以致電麥克米倫援助熱線 **0808 808 00 00** 查找您所在地區的支援團體。我們也可以嘗試查找是否有與您使用相同語言的支援團體。

為自己獲得合適的護理和援助

如果您患有癌症並且不會說英語，您可能會擔心會影響您的癌症治療和護理。但是您的醫療團隊應該可以為您提供能滿足您需要的護理、援助和資訊。

我們知道，有時尋找合適的援助可能會面對額外的困難。例如，如果您有工作或家庭，可能很難抽出時間到醫院出席預約覆診。您可能還會擔心金錢和交通費。所有這些事情都會讓人感到壓力和難以應對。

我們還向癌症患者提供麥克米倫 (Macmillan) 資助金。這是一次性的款項，可用於支付醫院停車費、交通費、托兒或暖氣費等費用。

我們的免費援助熱線 **0808 808 00 00** 可以用您的語言就您的情況提供建議。您可以與護士、經濟援助顧問、福利權益顧問和工作援助顧問交談。

麥克米倫 (Macmillan) 能夠如何幫助您

在麥克米倫 (Macmillan)，我們知道癌症確診後會如何影響您的各方面生活，我們隨時為您提供援助。

麥克米倫援助熱線 (Macmillan Support Line)

我們有傳譯員，所以您可以使用您的語言與我們溝通。您只需用英語告訴我們您希望使用哪種語言即可。我們可以幫助您解決醫療問題，為您提供有關經濟援助的資訊，或者在您想要與人交談的時候聆聽您的意見。熱線服務時間為每星期七天，每日上午 8 時至晚上 8 時。您可致電 **0808 808 00 00** 聯絡我們。

麥克米倫 (Macmillan) 網站

我們的網站有很多關於癌症的英文資訊。該網站還有更多以其他語言編寫的資訊：
macmillan.org.uk/translations

我們亦可以為您安排翻譯。請發電子郵件至：

cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk，告訴我們您需要的資訊。

資訊中心

我們的資訊和援助中心設在醫院、圖書館和流動中心。您可以前往任何一個中心，獲取您需要的資訊並與工作人員面對面交談。您可以瀏覽

macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres 查找離您最近的中心或致電 **0808 808 00 00** 聯絡我們。

本地支援團體

您可以在支援團體中與其他受癌症影響的人交流。您可以瀏覽

macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups

查找您附近的支援團體或致電 **0808 808 00 00** 聯絡我們。

麥克米倫 (Macmillan) 網上社群

您亦可以瀏覽 [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community) 與其他受癌症影響的人士交流。不論是白天還是夜晚，您都可以隨時使用該服務。您可以分享您的經驗、提出問題，或者只是閱讀其他人的帖子。

更多繁體中文資訊

我們提供更多有關下列主題的繁體中文資訊：

應對癌症

- 癌症與新冠病毒
- 英國的癌症護理
- 如果您患有癌症，可申請的福利
- 飲食問題與癌症
- 生命的終結
- 難民和尋求庇護人士的醫療保健
- 健康飲食
- 患癌時獲得費用幫助
- 若您被診斷患有癌症
- LGBTQ+ 人士與癌症
- 敗血症和癌症

- 癌症治療的副作用
- 疲倦（疲勞）與癌症

癌症類型

- 乳癌
- 子宮頸癌
- 大腸癌
- 肺癌
- 前列腺癌

治療

- 化療
- 放射治療
- 手術

若想查看相關資訊，請瀏覽 [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

參考文獻與致謝

本資訊由麥克米倫癌症援助機構 (Macmillan Cancer Support) 癌症資訊開發團隊編寫和編輯。由翻譯公司提供繁體中文的翻譯版本。

所包含的資訊都是根據我們網站上以英文提供的疲倦（疲勞）內容。

本資訊經有關專家審閱，並獲得我們的首席醫療編輯 Tim Iveson 教授（腫瘤學顧問）批准。

同時感謝審閱本資訊的癌症患者。

我們所有資訊的依據都是來自最佳的證據。欲瞭解我們所用資源的更多資訊，請透過 cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk 聯絡我們。

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MAC15754_Chinese Traditional

用您的母語諮詢 Macmillan

您可致電 Macmillan 免費電話 0808 808 00 00 透過傳譯員用您的母語與我們交談。您可以同我們討論您的憂慮和醫療問題。致電時，只需用英語告訴我們您想使用的語言。熱線服務時間為每週一到週日上午 8 時至晚上 8 時。

我們盡一切努力確保我們提供的資訊是準確和最新的，但請不要依賴這些資訊來替代針對您的情況的專業建議。在法律允許的範圍內，麥克米倫 (Macmillan) 不承擔與使用本出版物中的任何資訊或其中包含或提及的第三方資訊或網站相關的責任。

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Patient Information Forum

Tiredness (fatigue) and cancer

This information is about fatigue. Fatigue means feeling very tired. It can be caused by cancer or cancer treatments.

If you have any questions about this information, ask your doctor or nurse at the hospital where you are having treatment.

You can also call Macmillan Cancer Support on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. We have interpreters, so you can talk to us in your own language. When you call us, please tell us in English which language you need.

There is more cancer information in other languages at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

This information is about:

- What is fatigue?
- The effects of fatigue
- What causes fatigue?
- Getting a cancer diagnosis
- Getting help with fatigue
- Ways to manage fatigue
- Emotional support
- Tips for managing everyday activities
- Coping with fatigue at work
- Caring for someone with fatigue
- Getting the right care and support for you
- How Macmillan can help you
- More information in your language
- References and thanks

What is fatigue?

Fatigue is when you feel very tired most or all of the time. It is a common problem for people with cancer. Fatigue in people with cancer is sometimes called cancer-related fatigue or [CRF].

Fatigue caused by cancer is different from the tiredness that someone without cancer can get. People with cancer may get tired more quickly after activity. Resting or sleeping does not help to relieve the tiredness.

For most people, fatigue gets better after treatment finishes. But for some it may continue for months or even years.

The effects of fatigue

Fatigue can affect you in different ways. Some of the common effects of fatigue are:

- difficulty doing simple things, such as brushing your hair or getting dressed
- feeling you have no energy or strength
- difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- difficulty thinking, speaking or making decisions
- feeling breathless after light activity
- feeling dizzy or lightheaded
- difficulty sleeping (insomnia) or sleeping more than usual
- losing interest in sex
- feeling more emotional than usual.

It can be frustrating and overwhelming when you feel tired most of the time. It is important to tell your doctors and nurses about how it makes you feel. There are ways they may be able to help. There are also things you can do for yourself that may help. For example, being physically active can help your fatigue.

What causes fatigue?

We do not fully understand what causes cancer-related fatigue. There may be many reasons for it. It may be caused by:

Cancer

For some people cancer may cause fatigue.

Some cancers cells can irritate the lining of the tummy. This can cause the tummy to make too much fluid. Too much fluid in the tummy is called ascites. Ascites can cause discomfort and fatigue.

You may feel tired because the cancer has reduced the number of red blood cells in the body. Cells are the tiny building blocks that make up the organs and tissues of our body. A reduced number of red blood cells is called anaemia.

Hormones are a substance made by the body that control how organs work. Some cancers, such as breast and prostate cancer, can change the level of hormones in your body. This change can affect the way the body uses energy and may cause fatigue.

Cancer may affect the levels of cytokines in the body. Cytokines are a type of protein. They help control some of the things that cells do. Cytokines may be involved in cancer-related fatigue.

Cancer treatments

Doctors are still learning about why cancer treatments can cause fatigue. It might be because:

- the body needs extra energy to repair and heal
- there is a build-up of chemicals as the cancer cells are destroyed
- the body's immune system is affected

These cancer treatments may make you feel tired:

- **Surgery** – Surgery is a way of treating cancer by removing all or part of the cancer. This is also known as having an operation. Many people feel tired after surgery. It usually improves after a few weeks. Avoid doing too much for a while. You may have been anxious before your operation and not been sleeping well. Some medicines for pain can make you feel tired.
- **Chemotherapy and radiotherapy** – Chemotherapy is a cancer treatment that uses drugs to kill cancer cells. Radiotherapy is a cancer treatment that uses high energy rays, such as x-rays, to kill cancer cells. These treatments can cause fatigue. Fatigue usually improves 6 to 12 months after treatment ends. But sometimes it can last longer. Sometimes these treatments may cause long-term effects such as breathlessness (uncomfortable or fast breathing) or heart problems. These are likely to make you feel more tired. Chemotherapy and radiotherapy may also cause anaemia.
- **Hormonal therapy** – A cancer treatment that works by affecting hormones in the body. Some of these therapies can cause fatigue.
- **Targeted therapy** - A cancer treatment that uses drugs that target and attack cancer cells. Some of these therapies can cause fatigue.
- **Immunotherapy** - The immune system protects the body against illness and infection. Immunotherapies are treatments that use the immune system to find and attack cancer cells. Some of these therapies can cause fatigue.

Anaemia

Anaemia is when you have a low number of red blood cells. Red blood cells contain a protein called haemoglobin (Hb), which carries oxygen around the body. If you do not have enough red blood cells, this reduces the amount of oxygen your body gets. This can make you feel tired. If you have anaemia, you may also feel:

- breathless
- dizzy and light-headed
- tight in the chest.

Anaemia may be caused by chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Your doctor can check if you have anaemia. If you do have it, you may need treatment to make you feel better.

Eating problems

If you are not eating the same amount of food as you would normally, this may cause you to have less energy and feel tired. Some people lose weight even if they are eating a lot. This is because of the effect of the cancer on the body. It is important to tell your nurse or doctor if you are having problems eating.

If you feel sick and cannot eat, your doctor may be able to give you medicine to help. If you cannot take medicine for nausea, or cannot keep it down due to vomiting, speak to your doctor or nurse. There are other ways of taking anti-sickness medicines.

Pain

Pain can cause fatigue. If you have pain, painkillers and other treatments can help to relieve it. If your pain is relieved, this can also help your fatigue.

Other medical problems

Other medical problems may also make fatigue worse. If you are taking medicines for other conditions, these can sometimes make you feel tired too. Other medical problems that effect fatigue are:

- diabetes - a condition where the amount of sugar in the blood is too high because the body does not use it properly.
- thyroid problems - the thyroid is a gland in the neck. It makes hormones that help control the way your body functions.
- heart problems - such as heart failure.

Sleeping problems

Sleep problems when you have cancer are very common. Sleep is important for:

- physical health
- emotional wellbeing
- restoring energy
- concentration and memory.

Trouble sleeping (insomnia) over a long period of time can cause fatigue, low mood and difficulties with concentration.

Emotional effects of cancer

Fatigue can be caused by the emotional effects of cancer. People feel different emotions when they have cancer. You might feel worried, sad or angry. There is no right or wrong way to feel.

There are different types of emotional support you may find helpful, including talking and complementary therapies.

Getting a fatigue diagnosis

Before your fatigue can be treated, it is important it is properly assessed. Tell a member of your healthcare team if you have fatigue at any time.

Your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or GP will ask you some questions about your fatigue. Or they may use a questionnaire that asks you about the cancer, how you are feeling and how you cope with everyday activities.

Your doctor will check for any causes of fatigue that can be treated, such as anaemia. They may examine you and give you some blood tests. They might also look at the medicines you are taking to see if adjusting them could help.

Getting help with fatigue

Drug treatments for fatigue

There are not any drug treatments to help prevent or improve fatigue yet. Steroid drugs can sometimes be helpful. But they can have side effects, so you should talk to your doctor about whether they are right for you.

Research trials are carried out to try to find new and better drug treatments. This includes drug treatments for fatigue. Many hospitals now take part in these trials. Speak to your doctor about whether you could take part in a research trial on treating fatigue.

Getting support

There are members of your healthcare team who can help you manage your fatigue:

- **Cancer doctor or GP** – can help find out what is causing your fatigue and ways to manage it.
- **Clinical nurse specialist** – can assess and provide information and support about practical ways to manage fatigue. For example, if there are any support groups or activities such as exercise classes near where you live.
- **Physiotherapist** – can give advice on exercise and moving around. They can help you manage other symptoms such as breathlessness.
- **Occupational therapist** – can provide information, support and aids to help with everyday activities such as washing and dressing.
- **Social worker** – can help with practical and financial problems. They may help with arranging a carer to help at home.
- **Counsellor** – can listen and support you with any worries or concerns.

Ways to manage fatigue

There are different things you can do to manage your fatigue. Some of these may reduce your fatigue. Others may help you to cope better.

Planning ahead

If you have fatigue, planning ahead is important. This helps to make sure you can still do the things you most want to do. For example, you could:

- use a diary to record when you feel your best and when you feel most tired
- try to plan bigger tasks for times when you are likely to feel less tired
- plan enough time to rest after a period of activity.

Make sure you look after your own needs, even if you have others to think about.

Healthy diet and weight

- Eating well and keeping to a healthy weight can help increase your energy. If you have a reduced appetite or other problems eating, ask to see a dietitian at the hospital. They are an expert in food and nutrition. They can give you advice on what is best to eat.
- If you have taste changes, try different foods or eat foods that taste best to you until things improve.
- When you are hungry, make sure you eat well. Always try to drink plenty of fluids.
- Keep a diary each day of what you eat and when. Then you can see if you have more energy after certain foods.

Physical activity

If you have fatigue, you may become less active. When your muscles are not being used regularly, they become weaker. Physical activity can help reduce fatigue. Being active may help to:

- boost your appetite - this is when you feel you want to eat food
- give you more energy
- build up your muscle strength
- improve sleep.

Before you start doing any physical activity or increase the amount you do, it is important to get advice from a healthcare professional. They can advise you on the type and amount that is safe for you. Your cancer specialist or GP can also refer you to a physiotherapist. A physiotherapist can help you build up your physical fitness and muscle strength. Specialist cancer physiotherapists may be available in some areas.

Tips for keeping active

- Do not exercise if you feel unwell, are in pain or have any other symptoms that worry you, such as feeling breathless. Let your GP or cancer doctor know if you feel like this.
- Set yourself simple achievable goals. Try not to do too much too soon.
- Plan some activity into your day. For example, walk to the shops instead of driving, if you can.
- Try some regular, gentle exercise, such as walking. Or simple strengthening exercises, such as climbing stairs.
- Do something you enjoy, such as gardening.

Sleep

Your fatigue may make you feel like you want to sleep all the time. But it is important to keep to a sleep routine. Try to sleep between 6 and 8 hours each night. Good quality sleep may help with fatigue. It may also reduce your need to sleep during the day.

Tips for a better night's sleep:

- Go to bed and wake up at about the same time every day.
- Try not to sleep late into the day after a sleepless night. This can lead to a disrupted sleep pattern.
- Try to do gentle exercise like walking. This can help you feel naturally tired and ready for sleep.
- Keep your mind occupied with activities like reading, games or puzzles. This can also help you feel naturally ready to sleep.
- Be aware of how naps affect you. Some people find that daytime naps help them to sleep better at night. Others sleep less well after them.
- Try out a relaxing routine before bed. A warm bath or shower, reading or listening to soothing music might help.
- Steroids can cause sleep problems. If you are taking steroids, ask your doctor if you can take them earlier in the day.
- Alcohol and caffeine can stop you from falling asleep. Try to cut down on alcohol. And avoid caffeine close to bedtime.

Emotional support

Counselling

Fatigue can affect your emotions. It can make you feel more anxious or low in mood. If you are struggling emotionally, you may find counselling helpful. Counsellors are trained to listen. They can help you to deal with difficult emotions.

Many hospitals have counsellors who are specially trained to provide emotional support to people affected by cancer. Your cancer doctor or specialist nurse can tell you what services are available. They can also refer you. Some GPs also have counsellors in their practice, or they can refer you to one.

You may need to pay for some counsellors.

Support groups

Some people find it helps to talk to other people who have had fatigue. Most places in the UK have support groups. A healthcare professional sometimes leads them. Other members of the group may be in a similar position to you.

You can call our Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** to find out about support groups in your area. We can also try to find out if there is a support group where people use the same language as you.

Online support

Many people get support on the internet. Online support groups for people affected by cancer include:

- social networking sites
- forums
- chat rooms
- blogs.

You can use these to ask questions, get support, and give advice yourself. The [Macmillan Online Community] is an online cancer forum where you can talk to people and share your experience. There are many different groups. For example, we have groups for:

- specific cancer types
- family members and friends
- LGBTQ+ people
- practical issues.

Complementary therapies

Complementary therapies are activities that can make you feel better. They do not treat cancer. But they can help you to cope with its symptoms or with the side effects of your cancer treatment.

There are different complementary therapies that may help with fatigue, such as:

- Relaxation techniques – a type of complementary therapy that can calm the mind and reduce muscle tension.
- Massage therapy – a complementary therapy that uses touch and gentle pressure to relieve tension.
- Yoga – a type of exercise using gentle stretching, deep breathing and movement.

Before you use a complementary therapy, talk to your specialist doctor or nurse. Some therapies may affect your cancer treatment.

Some of these therapies may be available on the NHS. Your GP can give you more information. You may also be able to access them through a cancer support group.

To stay safe, it is important to always check a therapist's qualifications and experience treating people with cancer. If you need help with this, ask your doctor or nurse, or call the Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 0000**.

Tips for managing everyday activities

If you need help with things at home, you may be able to ask family, friends and neighbours. Having a support network can make a big difference. Your family and friends may not realise how much you need help. Or they may be waiting for you to ask for help.

There are things you can do that may help with everyday tasks.

Housekeeping

- Spread tasks out over the week. Do a little housework each day rather than lots at one time.
- If possible, ask other people to do heavy work such as gardening.
- Sit down to do some tasks if you can.

Shopping

- Make a list before you start so you do not waste energy or time.
- If possible, go grocery shopping with a friend or family member for extra help.
- Most large supermarkets offer online shopping which can be delivered to your home.
- Use a shopping trolley so you do not need to carry a heavy basket. A wheeled shopping bag may help with shopping and getting things home.
- Shop at less busy times.
- Ask shop staff for help with packing and taking groceries to the car.

Preparing meals

- Prepare extra meals or double portions when you are feeling less tired and freeze them for when you need them.
- Try having ready-made meals when you are most tired.
- If you can, sit down while preparing meals.

Washing and dressing

- Sit down in the bath rather than standing in a shower if you can. This may help to use less energy.
- Sit down in the shower to avoid standing for too long. An occupational therapist may be able to get you a shower seat.
- Wear clothes that are easy to put on and take off.
- Sit down when you are getting dressed.

Occupational therapists

Occupational therapists help people who have difficulty moving around or doing everyday tasks. They may be able to visit you at home to help you find ways to do things more easily. Your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or GP can refer you to an occupational therapist.

Childcare

If you have a family, you might find it difficult to look after them while coping with fatigue. It can be upsetting when you are unable to do your usual family activities. There are things you could do to make childcare easier:

- Explain to any children that you feel tired often and will not be able to do as much with them as before.
- Plan activities with them that you can do sitting down. Such as board games or puzzles.
- Try to plan activities where there are places for you to sit down while the children play.
- Avoid carrying small children. Use a pram or pushchair instead.
- Try to involve children in some household tasks.
- Ask for and accept help from family and friends.

Driving

If you feel very tired, driving can be difficult and dangerous. You may be less alert than normal and less able to concentrate. Your reaction time may also be reduced. You might find these tips helpful:

- Do not drive if you feel very tired.
- If possible, ask a family member or friend to drive you.
- If you need to get to hospital appointments, ask your nurse or doctor if there is any hospital transport available.
- If you feel yourself falling asleep while driving, stop in a safe place and take a break. Try to avoid driving at times when roads are busiest.

Coping with fatigue at work

You may find that fatigue affects the way you work.

Anyone with cancer is protected by the Equality Act 2010. This means that employers should not treat people with cancer unfairly. It also means that employers are expected to make reasonable adjustments at work to support people with cancer. Reasonable adjustments are changes to your work that your employer can make to allow you to stay at work or return to work. Laws that protect people from discrimination say that your employer must make these changes in certain situations.

If you want to keep working, talk to your manager openly about ways to make your work less tiring. This is part of making reasonable adjustments. Changes could include:

- regular rests or short naps – you may find this useful after an activity or meal
- working from home if possible
- avoiding physical tasks
- planning work around times when you have more energy.

Using a fatigue diary may help you to see what days or times you are most tired. This can help you decide when it is best for you to work or rest.

Explaining the effects of fatigue to your colleagues might also help you to manage your fatigue at work. It may be difficult for some people to understand how tired you are, especially if you look well.

You may find it helpful to talk to the Department for Work and Pensions. They can tell you about benefits that you may be entitled to claim.

For more information about benefits, please see our fact sheet 'Financial support – benefits' at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

Caring for someone with fatigue

Many people give support to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour who has fatigue. Caring for someone with fatigue can mean many things. For example: helping with personal care, providing transport or organising appointments.

If you are caring for someone with fatigue, there are many simple things that you can do to help:

- Acknowledge that fatigue is difficult to cope with.
- Use a fatigue diary to plan. This will help you both to see when the person with fatigue has the energy to do things.
- Try to help the person you care for be more active or make changes to their diet to help them reduce their fatigue.

You can also go to hospital appointments with the person you care for. You could help them explain to the healthcare team how the fatigue is affecting you both. You could also show them the person's fatigue diary and ask their advice about what else you can do to help.

Looking after yourself

When you are caring for someone else it is important to look after yourself too. Make sure you keep up with your own health appointments. This includes any vaccinations you need, such as the flu jab. If you are taking any medicines regularly, it is important you have a supply of these.

If you look after someone, you can ask the adult social services at your local council to look at your needs to see what might help you. This is called a carer's assessment.

The following tips may help:

- Talk to your GP if you are having problems eating or sleeping, are struggling with difficult feelings or are finding it hard to cope.
- Accept help from others or ask for help.
- Make sure you have time off to relax. Do something you enjoy like reading, going for a walk or going for a meal.
- Try to eat healthy food and sit down to eat.
Try to get out of the house every day and do some gentle exercise like walking. This can help you feel less tired and stressed.

You can call our Macmillan Support Line on **0808 808 00 00** to find out about support groups in your area. We can try to find out if there is a support group where people speak the same language as you.

Getting the right care and support for you

If you have cancer and do not speak English, you may be worried that this will affect your cancer treatment and care. But your healthcare team should offer you care, support and information that meets your needs.

We know that sometimes people may face extra challenges in getting the right support. For example, if you work or have a family it can be hard to find time to go to hospital appointments. You might also have worries about money and transport costs. All of this can be stressful and hard to cope with.

We also offer Macmillan Grants to people with cancer. These are one-off payments that can be used for things like hospital parking, travel costs, childcare or heating bills.

Our free support line **0808 808 00 00** can offer advice, in your language, about your situation. You can speak to nurses, financial guides, welfare rights advisers and work support advisers.

How Macmillan can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we are here to support you.

Macmillan Support Line

We have interpreters, so you can speak to us in your language. Just tell us, in English, the language you want to use. We can help with medical questions, give you information about financial support, or be there to listen if you need someone to talk to. The free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. Call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Macmillan website

Our website has lots of information in English about cancer. There is also more information in other languages at [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

We can also arrange translations just for you. Email us at cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk to tell us what you need.

Information centres

Our information and support centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. Visit one to get the information you need and speak with someone face to face. Find your nearest centre at [macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Local support groups

At a support group, you can talk to other people affected by cancer. Find out about support groups in your area at [macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/supportgroups) or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Macmillan Online Community

You can also talk to other people affected by cancer online at [macmillan.org.uk/community](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/community) You can access it at any time of day or night. You can share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts.

More information in your language

We have information in your language about these topics:

Coping with cancer

- Cancer and coronavirus
- Cancer care in the UK
- Claiming benefits when you have cancer
- Eating problems and cancer
- End of life
- Healthcare for refugees and people seeking asylum
- Healthy eating
- Help with costs when you have cancer
- If you are diagnosed with cancer
- LGBTQ+ people and cancer
- Sepsis and cancer

- Side effects of cancer treatment
- Tiredness (fatigue) and cancer

Types of cancer

- Breast cancer
- Cervical cancer
- Large bowel cancer
- Lung cancer
- Prostate cancer

Treatments

- Chemotherapy
- Radiotherapy
- Surgery

To see this information, go to [macmillan.org.uk/translations](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/translations)

References and thanks

This information has been written and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been translated into this language by a translation company.

The information included is based on our tiredness (fatigue) content available in English on our website.

This information has been reviewed by relevant experts and approved by our Chief Medical Editor, Professor Tim Iveson, Consultant Medical Oncologist.

Thanks also to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this information.

All our information is based on the best evidence available. For more information about the sources we use, please contact us at cancerinformationteam@macmillan.org.uk

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Speak to Macmillan in your language

You can call Macmillan free on 0808 808 00 00 and speak to us in your language through an interpreter. You can talk to us about your worries and medical questions. Just tell us your language in English when you call. We are open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up-to-date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication or third party information or websites included or referred to in it.

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Patient Information Forum