

### *How can my family and friends help?*

Asking for help from family and friends can be a tremendous help - especially having their help for activities that tire you. Tell them this is not ordinary tiredness you feel. You may need to put some activities off until you feel stronger. Remember not to be reluctant to ask for help.

### *What emotional support is helpful?*

Many patients undergoing treatment find it helpful to join a support group. These groups allow you to share feelings and concerns with other patients who have similar experiences. Writing your feelings in a journal can also be helpful. In addition, you can try meditation or being with family members and good friends.

### **Remember To:**

- Alternate rest with activity
- Eat well
- Ask for assistance from family and friends
- Plan ahead so you are efficient and save time and energy as often as possible
- Discuss your fatigue and its management with your doctor or healthcare team

### **Always Keep in Mind...**



**I**t is very important for you to be your own best health advocate.

Follow all your home care instructions

carefully. Learn how to identify and manage effectively the side effects you may experience during your cancer treatments. Report any unusual symptoms to your doctor or member of your healthcare team.

## **About the Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital Cancer Treatment Center**



**L**ake Cumberland Regional Hospital's Cancer Treatment Center moved into its new, state-of-the-art facility in May 2004. Since opening, the Center has treated approximately 25 new patients each month.

The Center is part of Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital that is in the final stages of a \$55 million expansion and renovation, which includes a new parking garage and five story patient tower.

Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital, a 259-bed facility, opened in May, 1976. In addition to the Cancer Treatment Center, outpatient surgery, sleep disorders and outpatient radiology centers are also featured on campus.

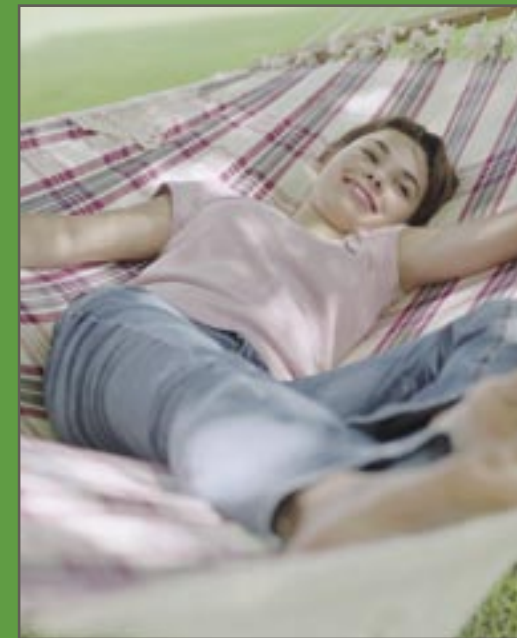
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**LAKE CUMBERLAND**  
Regional Hospital

*Leading the way to better healthcare.*

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## **Managing Cancer Related Fatigue**



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# Managing Cancer-Related Fatigue

Fatigue is one of the most common side effects that cancer patients face during treatment. This fatigue can take several forms - physical, mental or even spiritual.

The fatigue can range from mild to severe, where just getting out of bed is a challenge. Your normal, everyday activities, like household chores or walking a short distance, can be overwhelming. This is more than the tiredness a person feels because of a poor night's sleep.

It is important for patients to try and relieve fatigue because you want to have enough energy to complete your treatments and enjoy a good quality of life during your treatments.

## Signs of Fatigue

There are a number of signs that may indicate you have fatigue. They include:

- Mental or physical exhaustion or weariness
- Feeling like you have no energy to do regular activities
- Lack of desire to do everyday activities
- Difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly
- Less attention spent on personal appearance
- A feeling of heaviness in your arms and/or legs which makes them difficult to move

## Reasons for Fatigue

Most cancer patients will feel tired at some time during their treatment cycle. There are several reasons for this. Medications you are taking, lack of sleep, poor nutrition, weight loss, hormonal imbalances and energy used by your body to repair itself after radiation, chemotherapy or surgery may

all result in fatigue. Emotions such as anxiety and depression can also contribute to being tired.

Chemotherapy treatments may affect your ability to produce red blood cells. A very low red blood cell count - known as anemia - limits the body's ability to distribute oxygen, which energizes the body. Anemic patients may also feel short of breath - another factor that slows down an individual.

## Managing Your Fatigue

There are several ways that may help you keep your fatigue under control and at a minimum.

### *Rest and Energy Conservation*

Rest and sleep are important and you need to remember not to overdo it. Too much rest can actually make you feel more tired. Your doctor may prescribe a sleeping aid if you cannot sleep well. Rest before you get tired. Know that some days may be better than others. Always alert your doctor or healthcare professional if you feel you are not getting adequate rest.

### *Activity and Exercise*

You should try and stay as active as you can during your treatment. Regular but gentle exercises, like walking, yoga or Tai Chi, may help you feel more energized. But you must remember to alternate rest and activity to keep your fatigue under control.

### *Nutrition*

During your treatment, drink plenty of fluids. That typically means eight to ten cups each day. Also, eat nutritious, high-protein, high-fat foods. Make sure to get enough calories to maintain your energy level. Ask a dietitian about the nutrients you need. Work with your healthcare team to manage any stomach or bowel distress that can

interfere with nutrition. Remember the importance of your diet in your treatment.

### *Task Management*

In managing your fatigue, you may find it helpful to spread your activities across the day and across the week. This will allow you to have rest breaks in your schedule. Ask for help with housework and errands. If you need help, the Cancer Treatment Center has a social worker that can assist you in finding community resources to aid you with your everyday activities.

### *Be Good To Yourself*

Remember to be good to yourself and have some fun! Plan activities that will help restore your spirit and energy. Bird watching, visiting Lake Cumberland with a good friend and listening to music are all great activities. Try to plan pleasant activities at least three times a week. If these don't help, talk to your doctor about medication that may help improve your mood.

## Common Questions

### *How much should I rest if I am fatigued?*

While you may want to increase your amount of sleep and take naps occasionally, too much rest can actually make you feel more tired. Try to keep up your normal activity level every day, but remember not to push yourself too hard.

Resting too much during daytime hours may also make it difficult to sleep at night.

### *How do I know if I am making progress in fighting my fatigue?*

Lake Cumberland Regional Hospital's Cancer Treatment Center recommends that you keep a journal and chart your response to the activities you do. This will allow you to recognize your limits and see your progress. A journal can also be helpful when you talk about these issues with your doctor or healthcare team.