

Fatigue


A side effect of
chemotherapy and
biotherapy



**ST VINCENT'S
PRIVATE HOSPITAL**
NORTHSIDE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

*Information contained within this booklet was accurate at the time of printing (November 2020).
Whilst every effort is made to keep this information up-to-date, it is subject to change.*



Fatigue is a common side effect experienced by people receiving chemotherapy or biological therapy. It can be exhausting, distressing and persistent.

This booklet provides some useful strategies to help with managing fatigue.

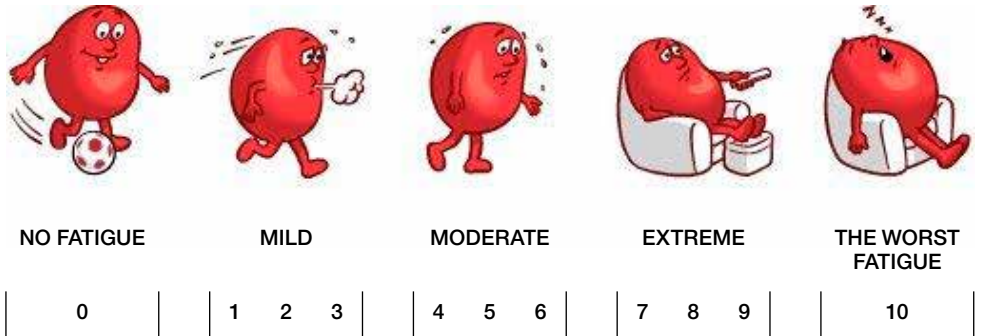
Fatigue management strategies

In order to manage fatigue, it is essential that you set priorities and have realistic expectations.

Pacing yourself is a useful tactic. Remember to breathe and relax.

Simplify demands in your life by reducing them. Delegate tasks to others and eliminate demands which may cause stress.

Use the following scale to help identify your level of fatigue.



Helpful hints

Activity

- Stay positive and keep moving.
- Maintain an exercise program, if possible. Ensure you consult with a health professional prior to engaging in any exercise program.
- Consider using a wheelchair or wheelie walker for long outings, such as shopping.
- Avoid walking at a fast pace, as it can affect your breathing and safety.
- Maintain good posture whilst driving.
- Install handrails in the bathroom and on the stairs for assistance.
- Create rest stops by placing chairs around the house.
- Remove rugs and any other potential tripping hazards from your home.
- Ensure steps and stairs within your home are highly visible and free from hazard.
- Discuss with your doctor your eligibility for a disabled parking permit.

Rest and relaxation

- Monitor your fatigue levels.
- Limit naps to one hour or less.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Go to bed at a regular time.
- Establish a bedtime routine that includes strategies for winding down.
- Games, music, reading and socialising can serve as great methods of relaxation and distraction.
- Reduce stress by practicing relaxation techniques.
- Rest and relax in chairs with armrests.

Helpful hints when at home

Personal care

- Sit while dressing or shaving.
- Avoid leaning forward without support (i.e. in front of a mirror over a basin). Rest your elbows on counters or dressing tables.
- Avoid holding your hands above your head by using long-handled brushes or combs.
- Consider using brushes with built-up, rubberised handles, if your grip is weak.
- Use an over-toilet seat.

Dressing

- Sit down when dressing.
- Select clothing that is simple to put on and take off.
- Select loose fitting clothing, which allows you to breathe easily.
- Allow sufficient time to get ready, so there is no need to rush.
- Avoid leaning over when putting on socks and shoes. Bring your foot to your knee.
- Wear supportive, comfortable, non-slip shoes.
- Use a long-handled shoehorn to help when putting shoes on, if necessary.
- Eliminate bending by using long-handled tongs to pick up items in low places.

Helpful dressing hint for women:

Avoid reaching your arms by fastening your bra in front, then turning it to the back.

Bathing

- Wherever possible sit on a chair to shower.
- Install grab rails in your bathroom for assistance.
- Avoid reaching or leaning in the shower.
- Install a shower organiser to place items in easy reach.
- Use a long-handled sponge or brush to reach your feet and back.
- Dry-off sitting down or use a towelling bathrobe.
- An Occupational Therapist may be able to provide you with further advice upon consultation.

Housekeeping

- Take rest breaks and prioritise your tasks.
- Take your time when doing chores.
- Delegate chores to others, if necessary.
- Accept help from others.
- Employ a housekeeper or cleaner to assist with housework.
- Avoid carrying supplies by using a wheeled trolley or apron.
- Avoid reaching by using long-handled dusters and dustpans.

Making the bed

- Simply pull your doona over.
- Avoid exerting yourself.
- Avoid leaning over by making one side of the bed completely and then moving to the other side to make the rest.

Laundry

- Adjust the height of your ironing board, so that you can sit whilst ironing.
- Avoid using a heavy item by purchasing a lightweight iron.



Helpful hints for the kitchen

Preparing meals

- A Dietitian may be able to assist with nutrition management upon consultation.
- Try eating small meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Stock up on a supply of ready-to-eat snacks such as hard cheese, dairy desserts, yoghurt, dried fruit and nuts.
- Gather your ingredients and equipment before preparing a meal.
- Use compact, lightweight appliances and utensils.
- Avoid carrying multiple items by using a trolley.
- Avoid reaching and bending in the kitchen by storing frequently used items at chest level.
- Do not strain yourself. Use a jar opener.
- Use a rubber mat under your mixing bowls to hold them steady while stirring or mixing.
- Avoid lifting heavy pots and pans off the stove. Ladle food out at the stove.

Cleaning up

- Avoid cleaning up by using disposable plates and cups.
- Avoid scrubbing dishes by lining cooking pans with baking paper.
- Soak your dishes rather than scrubbing them.
- Delegate cleaning up to others or use a dishwasher.
- Avoid drying dishes with a towel by letting them air-dry.

Important reminder

Notify your doctor about any nausea or vomiting. When you are unable to eat and drink, your fatigue worsens.

Helpful hints for out and about

Shopping

- Avoid extra steps by creating a weekly shopping list organised by store aisle or simply order your groceries online and arrange for delivery.
- Buy pre-cut vegetables and fruit.
- Request assistance with your groceries.
- Avoid busy shopping periods.

Childcare

- Consider activities that involve sitting and rest.
- Avoid lifting by teaching small children to climb onto your lap.
- Complete household chores with help from your children. Turn each chore into a fun activity for them.

At work

- Prioritise your workload.
- Delegating is important.
- Avoid agreeing to tight deadlines.
- Ensure your workplace is safe and comfortable.
- Take periodic rest breaks when necessary and if possible.



Other resources

Fatigue



Breast Cancer Network Australia

www.bcna.org.au

1800 500 258

Cancer Council Queensland

www.cancerqld.org.au

13 11 20

Canteen

www.canteen.org.au

1800 226 833

Gather My Crew

www.gathermycrew.org

Leukaemia Foundation

www.leukaemia.org.au

1800 620 420

Lung Foundation Australia

www.lungfoundation.com.au

1800 654 301

Ovarian Cancer Australia

www.ovariancancer.net.au

1300 660 334

St Vincent's Private Hospital Northside

627 Rode Road, Chermside QLD 4032

Phone: 07 3326 3000

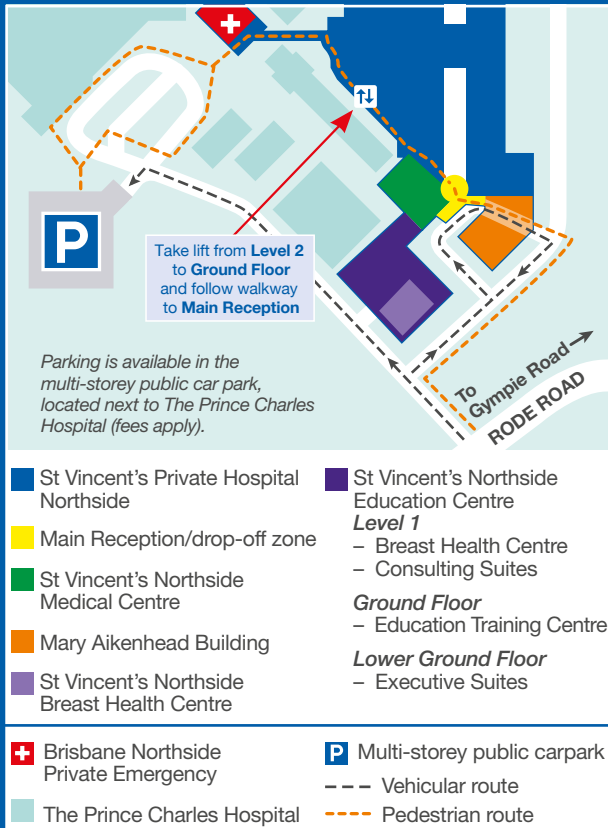
Email: svphn.enquiries@svha.org.au

Website: www.svphn.org.au

 @stvincentsprivatehospitalnorthside



Free WiFi available by connecting to WiFiHotSpot



Developed in consultation with our consumers (November 2016)

UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES