

# Managing Cancer-Related Fatigue Through Adequate Rest

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**Otitolola G. Arterbery, MSN, RN, OCN**  
Research Nurse Specialist,  
Department of Leukemia  
The University of Texas  
MD Anderson Cancer Center  
Houston, Texas

**Please note:** For the most current recommendations and information, please consult your physician

Having less than the recommended hours of good sleep can certainly cause fatigue. If you aren't as active during the day and wake up frequently during the night, you are likely to have more issues with fatigue. Any disturbance in one's circadian rhythm, or 24-hour cycle, is also capable of inducing fatigue.

## **Tips for better sleep**

### **During the Day**

- Exercise some every day.
- Don't exercise in the evening.
- Allow at least three hours before bedtime to come back down from the increased heart rate from exercise.
- Try to minimize your naps. If you need to nap, try to limit it to less than half an hour.

### **Before Bedtime**

- Avoid drinking alcohol, consuming caffeine, eating chocolate or using nicotine in the late afternoon and evening as these are all stimulants with lasting effects.
- Limit your intake of liquids in the evening before going to bed so that you won't have to get up to use the restroom.
- Turn off the television and the internet one hour before bedtime. You can listen to quiet, soothing relaxing music or take a warm bath.
- If your brain just won't wind down, try mental imagery. When your mind is racing, slow it by focusing on an image that is a little challenging. Can you draw a map of the USA in your mind? See the numbers at you count backwards in threes from 300? Or you could go with good old fashioned sheep! This will help you to relax.

### **At Bedtime**

- Commit to a routine bedtime and waking time.
- Before going to bed, a small snack of a banana, cherries, greek yogurt, whole grain crackers or almond butter may make you sleepy.
- Your bedroom is for sleep and intimacy only; don't read, watch TV or work in the bedroom, train your brain to know what that sanctuary space is for.
- If you tend to watch the clock as you try to fall asleep turn the clock around or hide it from view.
- If you know the position that you usually wake up in, try to fall asleep in that position.
- Ask your partner go to observe the same bedtime as you, this is important for numerous reasons, but one is so that you aren't awakened when your partner tries to get into your bed after you are already sleeping.
- Try to make your bedroom a dark, cool, quiet, relaxing space.
- One extra hour of sleep can be added if you feel ill or are unable to get up in the morning.
- Try meditation, massage or relaxation to lower stress. Books, CDs, DVDs can help you get started with these.
- Avoid mental stimulation like the TV, computer, books telephone conversations and video games.

## **References**

UT M D Anderson Cancer Center. (August 20, 2014). A patient guide for managing cancer-related fatigue. Retrieved from <http://inside2.mdanderson.org/apps/pe/docs/pdfOnly/3166.pdf>

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