

DURING AND AFTER TREATMENT

Fatigue/Lack of Endurance: Common Side Effect

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For fatigue/lack of endurance, standards of care are based on established evidence-based practice.

Definition

- Fatigue is a distressing, persistent, and subjective sense of tiredness or exhaustion that is not proportional to the activity and interferes with usual function.
- Lack of endurance refers to limited physical capability to sustain an exercise or activity for an extended period of time.

Incidence

- From 80% to 100% of patients with cancer report experiencing fatigue. It can be isolated or occur within a symptom cluster with pain, depression, dyspnea, anorexia, and sleep disturbance.

Assessment Tools and Recommended Intervals

- Screen at regular intervals with a scale from 1 (no fatigue) to 10 (worst fatigue imaginable).
- A detailed assessment should include onset, pattern, duration, change over time, aggravating or relieving factors, and interference with function.
- Based on the presence of other symptoms, onset, and severity of fatigue, consider seeking a complete blood cell count with differential, comprehensive metabolic panel with hepatic and renal function, and endocrinologic evaluation with thyroid-stimulating hormone.

Prevention

- Encourage a healthy lifestyle with exercise and a healthy diet combined with adequate hydration.

Evidence-Based Interventions and Management

- Suggest increased physical activity (30 minutes of intentional moderate exercise daily, with a goal of three to five hours per week). Yoga and tai chi can also be implemented.
- Manage concurrent symptoms, such as depression or anxiety.
- Stress adequate hydration and electrolyte balance to prevent and treat fatigue.
- Recommend psychosocial interventions, including cognitive behavioral therapy, supportive expressive therapies (e.g., art, music, pet therapy), or guided relaxation therapy, as needed.
- If nonpharmacologic interventions are not effective, consider adding a psychostimulant (methylphenidate).

Agents and Interventions to Avoid

- Modafinil and armodafinil are not likely to be effective.
- Discourage excessive alcohol use, which can lead to somnolence.
- When possible, avoid medications with a side effect of drowsiness, dizziness, or sedation.

Evidence-Based Resources for Providers

- *NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: Cancer-Related Fatigue* (v.1.2021) (www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/fatigue.pdf)
- Oncology Nursing Society Putting Evidence Into Practice: Fatigue (www.ons.org/pep/fatigue)

Evidence-Based Resources for Patients and Family

- Cancer.Net: Fatigue (<https://bit.ly/3Chg0o6>)
- *NCCN Guidelines for Patients: Survivorship Care for Cancer-Related Late and Long-Term Effects* (www.nccn.org/patients/guidelines/content/PDF/survivorship-crl-patient.pdf)
- American Cancer Society Guidelines for Fitness and Nutrition in Cancer Survivors (<https://bit.ly/3baSrSc>)

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