

For links to websites about cancer care, information and support, visit our website:  
[www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk/patientsandcarers)

## Support us

The services Marie Curie Cancer Care provides are always free to patients and families but we can only continue to do this through the generosity of our supporters. There are many ways to make a difference:

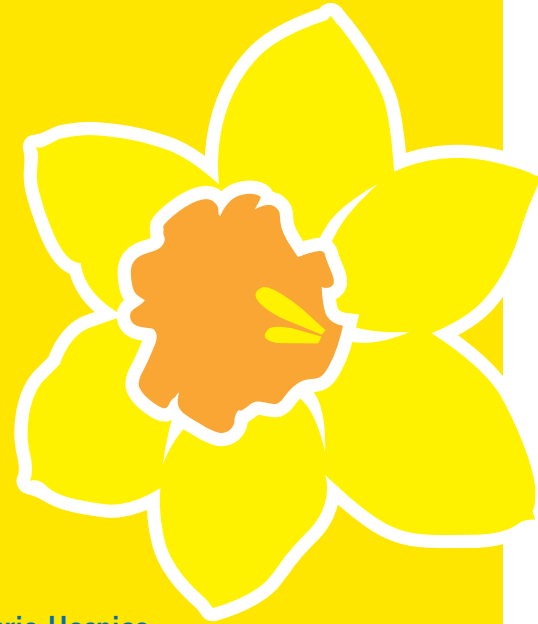
- make a donation
- leave a legacy in your will
- take part in a fundraising event
- volunteer your time for a wide range of activities
- sponsor a Light to Remember
- become a corporate partner

To find out more, phone: **0800 716 146**, visit our website: [www.mariecurie.org.uk](http://www.mariecurie.org.uk) or talk to the hospice fundraiser.

Your local Marie Curie Hospice actively promotes quality of life for people with cancer and other illnesses and provides support for their families, completely free.



# Managing your fatigue



Marie Curie Hospice

## What is fatigue?

Fatigue is a feeling of extreme tiredness and lack of energy. It is not always possible to know what causes fatigue or why the symptoms may persist. Fatigue can affect many people when they are having treatments such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy or during illnesses such as anaemia. It can also occur when people have been ill for a long time. People who have severe fatigue describe it as paralysing.

There are many common signs of fatigue, including:

- feeling as if you have no energy; as if you could spend the whole day in bed
- difficulty completing simple daily tasks, such as washing and dressing
- shortness of breath on light exertion
- difficulty concentrating; you may have to think harder before making decisions
- not enjoying the things you usually do, such as walking, reading or watching TV

## What can be done to help?

If you think you have fatigue it is important to look after yourself and tell your nurse or doctor as they may need to check for illnesses such as anaemia. They may also ask for permission to refer you to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist, so they can offer more specialist advice.

**Rest and sleep:** these are important, but you should be careful not to rest and sleep too much. Try to go to bed at the same time each night and make sure your bed and pillows are as comfortable as possible, to give your body good support.

**Nutrition:** drink plenty of fluids and eat a well-balanced diet. Energy-giving foods are also important, so try to eat bread, potatoes and sweet things. If you cannot face normal-sized meals, eat little and often.

**Activity:** try to stay as active as you can without overdoing it. You may feel as if you have no energy, but some moderate exercise such as walking around the garden or to the end of the road will improve your circulation and this may help you to feel better.

**Looking after yourself:** relaxation may help with feelings of stress and tension and help to increase energy levels. If you are finding it difficult to manage, tell your doctor or nurse. They can arrange for another health professional, such as an occupational therapist, to advise you.

**Coping strategies:** planning ahead is important. Sort out your priorities and set yourself realistic, achievable goals. Consider accepting help when it is offered and spread your activities over a period of time rather than trying to do them all at once. You can do many things in different ways that will help you to save energy such as:

- Placing chairs around the house, so you can sit and rest when you need to.
- Doing household tasks sitting down - for example, preparing food.
- Wearing clothes that need minimal or no ironing.

Telling your family and friends how you are feeling will also let them know you may not be able to do all the things you need to, allowing them to offer you help.