



Coping with Sleep, Stress, and Fatigue During Cancer Treatment

Many people going through treatment notice changes in sleep, energy, and mood. These changes can affect daily life, but there are strategies that may help. Everyone responds differently, so try what feels comfortable for you and talk with your oncology or radiology care team about additional options.



Sleep Problems During Treatment

Sleep can be disrupted by treatment side effects, stress, or changes in routine. Poor sleep may leave you feeling more tired, anxious, or in pain. Tips to improve your sleep:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day, including weekends.
- Create a relaxing bedtime routine, such as gentle stretching, slow breathing, or guided imagery.
- Keep naps short. Try to limit daytime naps to 20–30 minutes.
- Bed = Sleep Only: Use your bed only for sleep so your body associates it with rest. If you're awake for more than ~20 minutes, get up and do something calming (like reading or journaling) away from your bed, then return when you feel sleepy.



Managing Stress and Anxiety

Feelings of worry or overwhelm are common during cancer treatment. Stress can make it harder to sleep and may increase fatigue or pain. Ways to manage stress and anxiety:

- Write down your worries or tasks before bed to clear your mind.
- Ask for help from friends, family, or your healthcare team early.
- Break large tasks into smaller steps and focus on one at a time.



Coping with Low Mood and Fatigue

Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation often cause tiredness and may sometimes increase pain. These symptoms can make daily routines more difficult, but small strategies can help you manage energy and feel more in control.

- Practice paced breathing during discomfort: breathe in for 4 counts, then breathe out slowly for 6 counts.
- Plan important activities for the times of day when you have the most energy. Include short rest breaks before you feel too tired.
- Use calming techniques such as guided meditation or gentle music to shift focus away from discomfort.
- Keep a simple journal of your energy levels, pain, and daily activities. Tracking patterns can help you and your care team find what works best for you.