

Beating Fatigue

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The Science of Fatigue

- Functional focus on muscle fatigue in elite athletes
- Sensory focus on chronic illness, primarily as a side effect of cancer treatment
 - Most common side effect of cancer treatment
 - Can persist for years after treatment
 - People who had transplants most likely to report persistent fatigue
 - Associated with anemia
 - Many other possible causes



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The Science of Fatigue (cont'd)


- Public health concern
 - Common problem in adults, limited information about fatigue in children
 - Seen in heart failure, arthritis, Parkinson's Disease, multiple sclerosis, fibromyalgia, lung disease, infection, allergies, following surgery, etc.
 - "Sick and tired of being tired and sick..."



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Myths About Fatigue


- It will go away if you just sleep or rest more
- It means you are just depressed
- You imagined it
- If you were really tired, you couldn't do anything
- You are trying to do too much



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Causes?


- Anemia
- Decreased physical activity?
- Immune system?
- Brain?
- Hormones?
- Sleep problems?
- ???



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What Helps?

- Fixing problems like anemia, low thyroid, etc.
- Exercise (current transplant studies)
- Understanding pattern and planning around it, doing things the "easy" way (energy conservation)
 - Planning activity around transfusion schedule
 - Exercise early in day if you crash and burn in the late afternoon
- Dealing with related problems: Pain, sleep problems, etc.



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What Helps? (cont'd)

- Stimulant drugs, novel situations
- Avoiding alcohol, heavy meals, boring meetings, etc.
- Acknowledging pattern/consistent communication
- Always have an exit plan or backup plan



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Exercise

- Aerobic exercise (walking, bike, swimming, etc.)
- Minimum of 3x/week for 30 minutes
- Gradually increasing intensity
- May adjust depending upon blood counts

Carlson, LE et al. (2006) Individualized exercise program for the treatment of severe fatigue after allogeneic HCT: A pilot study. *Bone Marrow Transplantation*, 37, 945-954.



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Examining Your Sleep

- Do you have trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting back to sleep?
- Keep track of lights out, awakenings, and time you get up
- What is going on? (Noise, people problems, pet problems, pain, full bladder, crackers in bed....?)
- Sleep lab studies if needed



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Current State of the Art...

- Approaches are individualized
- Recognize that post-transplant status means high risk for persistent fatigue
- Little research on symptoms in people with aplastic anemia or MDS. Current studies in cancer emphasize exercise.
- Energy conservation probably useful and not harmful



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