

Coping with Treatment Related Side Effects

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What is an NP?

- A **Nurse Practitioner (NP)** is a registered nurse (RN) with advanced training in diagnosing and treating illness. Nurse Practitioners prescribe medications, treat illness, and administer physical exams.

Side Effects of treatment

- Discuss
 - Fatigue
 - Chemo Brain
 - GI
 - Sexual Issues

Treatment related side effects

- Depends on the treatment
 - (different treatments for different patients/diseases.....)
- “Traditional” chemotherapy
 - Appetite loss, N/V/D/C (GI issues), hair loss, neuropathy, blood counts
- Targeted therapies/Immunotherapy
 - Rash, blood pressure, GI issues, blood counts
 - ‘-itis’
- Radiation
 - Local skin irritation, lymphedema
- Surgery
 - Body Image, Lymphedema, nerve “weirdness”

What can you do?

- Side effects are often times linked to each other
 - ie: constipation-nausea-decreased appetite-weight loss-fatigue
- Keep track of changes and how you feel
 - big things/small things
- Talk to your providers/nurses!!



The **MOST** common side effect
of all treatments



FATIGUE

What is fatigue?

- Cancer-related fatigue is a distressing, persistent, subjective sense of physical, emotional, and/or cognitive tiredness or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment that is not proportional to recent activity and interferes with usual functioning.

• NCCN Guidelines 2.2015

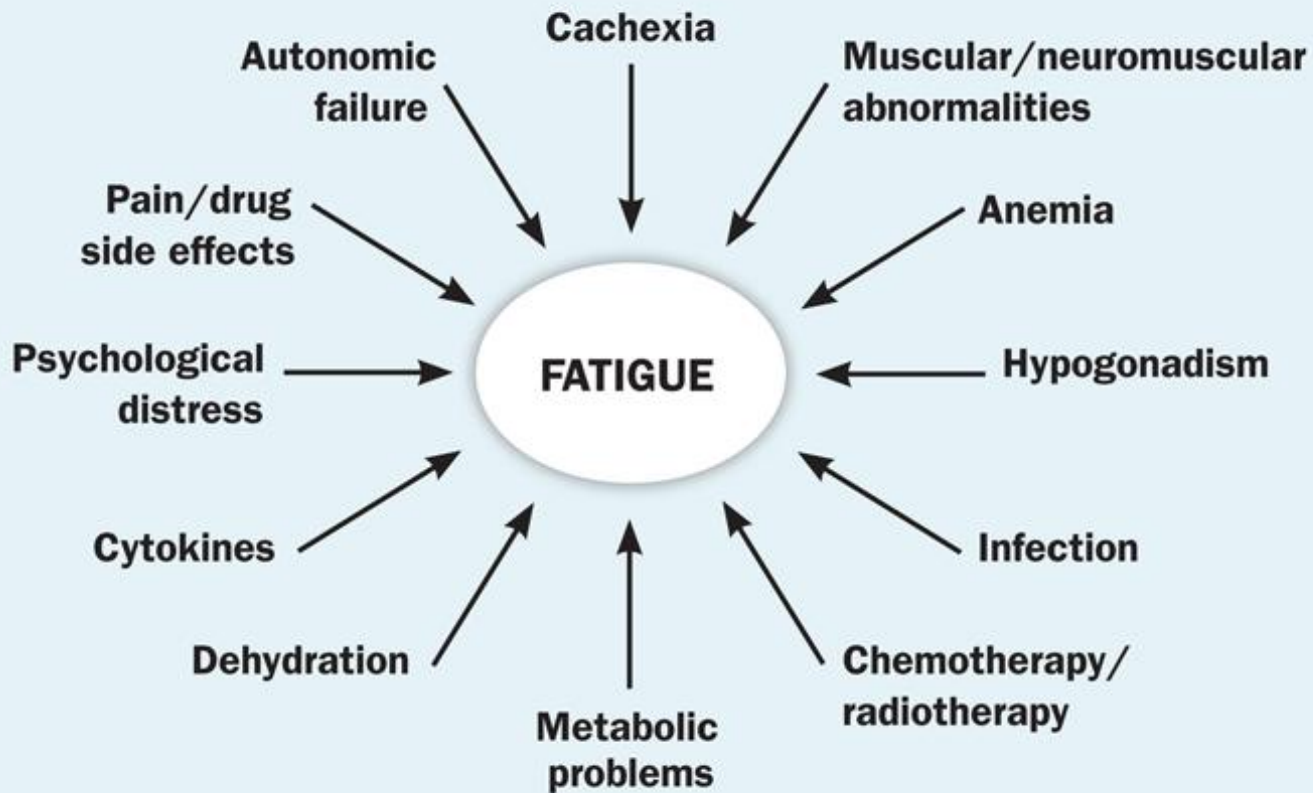


FIGURE 1: Contributors to fatigue in cancer patients.

- Sleep disturbance
- Lack of activity/deconditioning
- Other medical problems (COPD, diabetes...)

Treatment of fatigue depends on contributing factors

- Set priorities (self is #1)
- Conserve energy
- Structure activities
- Delegate
- Plan for fatigue (calendar)
- Rest and activity
- Tell your family and friends how you feel

Chemo Brain

- Cognitive changes, “mental cloudiness”
 - Include memory, concentration changes
- Some reports state this happens in up to 80% of patients receiving cancer treatment
- Not completely understood – yet
- Often times lingers after treatment is completed

Some things that may contribute to chemo brain

- Cancer itself
- Drugs (nausea, pain, anxiety, chemo)
- Low blood counts
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Hormone changes
- Co-morbidity (diabetes)
- Poor oral intake (food/water)
- Emotional distress (worry/fear/sadness)

What to do?

- Get plenty of sleep, eat well balanced diet and exercise
- Try and decrease stress
 - Meditation, relaxation, hypnotherapy
- Make lists/stay organized, use calendar
- Ask for help
- Try to do one thing at a time (no multitasking), limit distractions
- Puzzles – crosswords, Sudoku, simple math problems
- Keep mind active
 - Take a class, learn a language, play music

Gastro-intestinal “stuff”

- Taste change
- Mouth sores (ice during infusions)
- Nausea (before, during, after)
- Vomiting
- Heartburn
- Gas/bloating
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Appetite

Different treatments

- Taste – use plastic utensils/no metal
- Mouth sores – rinse baking soda/salt
- Heartburn – aloe vera, papaya, meds
- N/V/decreased appetite – prescription/iv/med marijuana
- Constipation – softeners/laxatives
- Diarrhea – over the counter meds, time, dehydration, easy to digest foods, gut rest

Sexual Issues

- Common question –
 - Sex during treatment
 - use barrier device
 - low counts
- Body changes
 - post surgery (colostomy, mastectomy)
 - port/PICC
- Decreased desire
 - fatigue

What to do?

- Intimacy – doesn't have to be intercourse
 - Be creative
 - Have fun



- Talk to your partner
- Talk to your provider

Questions

