

How to manage fatigue in palliative care



Managing fatigue can be a challenging aspect of a person's final months or weeks. Here are some suggestions to support good symptom management.

Fatigue is a feeling of extreme tiredness and lack of energy, which doesn't resolve with rest.

SIGNS OF FATIGUE

- Lack of energy
- Feeling irritable
- Difficulty completing simple tasks, such as washing and dressing
- Shortness of breath on light exertion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Not enjoying usual pleasures

COMMON CAUSES IN A PALLIATIVE CONTEXT

- The body using energy to fight disease
- Treatments such as chemotherapy, radiotherapy, surgery and medications. Immunotherapy in particular can cause fatigue that stays long after treatment is complete
- Disturbances in eating and sleeping habits
- Fatigue can be a symptom of anxiety or depression that accompanies illness
- Prolonged inactivity; reduced fitness
- Advanced illness - see over page



For further information
[www.hammondcare.com.au/
care/palliative-supportive-care](http://www.hammondcare.com.au/care/palliative-supportive-care)

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ADVANCED ILLNESS MAY CAUSE FATIGUE DUE TO

- Psychological stress

- Pain

- Medications having a sedative effect

- Symptoms of severe illness such as vomiting and breathing difficulties

- Lack of nourishment

CARE OPTIONS

- Check for illnesses such as anaemia

- Consider a referral to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist

- Rest and sleep, mostly at night

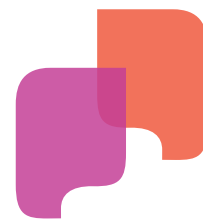
- Increase low-level exercise, carefully

- Improve nutrition

- Relaxation exercises or activities; meditation

- Avoid caffeine

- Reduce expectations of regular activities



Remember - fatigue is a very real symptom that requires attention.

Suggested resources

The Palliative Care Handbook

The Palliative Care - End of Life FlipChart

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