

## INTRODUCTION

Like all treatments for cancer, Radiation Therapy comes with its own side effects.

One of the main side effects that can occur, no matter what part of the body is being treated, is fatigue. This fatigue affects people to differing degrees: some patients may experience very little fatigue, whereas others can find it quite debilitating. Often patients describe it as making them feeling tired, lethargic and unmotivated.

Fatigue, or tiredness, during Radiation Therapy can often be worsened if other treatment modalities, such as chemotherapy, are being used. Fatigue caused by the Radiation Therapy treatment itself is thought to be due in part to the type of toxins released during the breakdown of some of the cells within the treatment area.

It is not possible to predict at treatment outset how the Radiation Therapy will make you feel because each individual reacts differently. We try to make patients aware of this potential side effect at the outset though, so that you are prepared and can put in place a routine that perhaps allows you to get some rest each day as the treatment progresses.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO LESSEN THE EFFECTS OF FATIGUE?

You and your body are going through a lot at this moment in your life, and the fatigue caused by Radiation Therapy can sometimes overwhelm people if they do not take steps to alleviate it.

The following points are some helpful hints for managing fatigue. That being said, every little step you take can help to counteract fatigue to some degree.

- Plan a short period of light activity each day, such as a walk or a stroll. Being inactive may actually increase fatigue.
  - Keep yourself well hydrated, increasing your fluid intake (unless your Doctor has restricted the amount of fluids you can drink due to another medical condition) helps flush out toxins from the body which can accumulate as a response to your treatment. Avoid too much caffeine.
  - Maintain a balanced diet.
  - Save time for activities you enjoy. Plan them as part of your day.
  - Don't be afraid to ask for help with chores. Accept and seek help with chores and jobs around the house. Don't try to do everything yourself.
-

Remember that fatigue is a temporary side effect of treatment, and it is different from ordinary tiredness. Also, the fatigue you may experience depends on many factors and varies from person to person. This type of fatigue may not be relieved by rest or sleep.

- Pace your activities throughout the day. Be sure to include periods of rest if at all possible during the day.
  - Set realistic goals. Increase or decrease activities as needed.
  - If possible, put off any strenuous activities you would normally perform.
  - Remember to look after yourself at this time. A lot of activities can wait until you are back to yourself and the Radiation Therapy side effects have passed.
  - Avoid returning to work or college too soon after your Radiation Therapy is completed. It can take up to six weeks, or sometimes longer, for the fatigue to settle.
-

Please use this space for questions and

notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**If the fatigue becomes bothersome for you, please make us aware of it so that your treatment team can help you through it.**

## **FATIGUE AS A SIDE EFFECT OF RADATION THERAPY**



*If you have any questions please do not*

*hesitate to ask any member of the team*

*whom you will meet on a daily basis.*

**USEFUL INFORMATION**

**Address:** UPMC Whitfield Cancer Centre, Cork  
Road, Co. Waterford

**Telephone:** 051337444

**Website:** [UPMCWhitfieldCancerCentre.ie](http://UPMCWhitfieldCancerCentre.ie)