Making the Most of your Energy & Taking Control of Fatigue
Definitions of Fatigue

- “A persistent, subjective sense of tiredness related to cancer or cancer treatment that interferes with usual functioning.”
  - National Comprehensive Care Network (2009)

- “Fatigue is an umbrella term used to describe various sensations or feelings, and a variety of expressions of reduced capacity at physical, mental, emotional, or social levels.”
Causes of Fatigue

- Effects of condition
- Effects of treatment
- Other existing medical conditions
- Exacerbation of symptoms of other medical conditions
- Other factors (worry about family, finances, work, etc)

- Wagner and Cella (2004)
How can fatigue be managed?

- Having information and talking about it
- Exercise
- Trying to manage anxiety and stress
- Changing ways of doing things and conserving energy
- Getting a balance of activity, rest and sleep
- Nutritional interventions
- ‘Restorative experiences’

(Ahlberg et al 2003)
Information
Exercise

Graded and regular exercise has been shown to improve the symptoms of fatigue
Managing Stress and Anxiety

- Relaxation
- Talking
- Support groups
- Distraction (e.g. listening to music)
Making the most of your energy

Have a balance of activity and rest
Planning Activities

- Consider which times of the day are best for you
- Avoid unnecessary exertion
- Try to space activities out during the week and not cram it all in to one day
Imagine having a jar of energy each day.

Your energy jar is topped up once over night.

What would you like to use your energy on?
Remember not to empty the jar completely – leave something in reserve
Nutrition

- Try to drink plenty of fluids
- Try having smaller portions
- Eat at times when your appetite is best
Sleeping Patterns

- Try to have a regular sleep / wake pattern
- Try to avoid sleeping during day
- Keep as active as possible during daytime
- Try to identify problems and worries well before going to bed
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol before bedtime
- Have your room at a comfortable temperature – maybe keep a window open
Mental Exhaustion

- Inform others when feeling overwhelmed or overloaded
- Try to cut out any distractions
- Write lists for activities e.g. shopping
- Keep a diary to help remember plan for the day and week
- Art / craft / gardening activities can help you to feel refreshed mentally
Setting & Working on your Goals

- Decide what you want to do – concentrate on 1 goal at a time
- Break the goal into smaller parts
- Make and action plan
- Ensure your goal is realistic
- Carry out the action plan
- Review the plan
- Reward yourself
Restorative Experiences

- Engaging interests
- Returning to normal living
- Breaking cycle of lethargy
- Combating cognitive fatigue
- Combating emotional fatigue
Summary

- Fatigue is often under reported or taken for granted.
- Whilst not taking away the fatigue completely, there are ways in which you can manage it.
Thank you for your time
Julie Burkin
Occupational Therapist and Lead Practitioner
Long Term Conditions Service
Addenbrookes Hospital
Tel: 01223 274404
julie.burkin@addenbrookes.nhs.uk
Reference List


Reference List Continued

Reference List Continued


