What is fatigue? “Fatigue” means feeling very tired and having little energy. Fatigue can be caused by working hard and not getting enough rest. This type of fatigue is often temporary and improves with rest.

Fatigue can occur with many illnesses and medical conditions. It can also be caused by medication and other treatments for your illness. Fatigue from illness or treatment does not improve with rest and can seriously affect your ability to function. This type of fatigue may affect your physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

What Are Signs and Symptoms of Fatigue?
- Your whole body feels weak or tired after little or no activity
- Lack of energy or interest in activities
- Not feeling rested after sleeping
- Problems with thinking, lack of focus, short attention span, or memory problems
- Irritability, impatience, sadness, or other changes in mood

What Causes Fatigue?
Fatigue may be related to our habits and how we live, such as:
- Spending too much time in a chair or in bed
- Exercising more than you can tolerate
- Using alcohol or illegal drugs
- Not enough sleep or poor sleep
- Constant stress and worry

Fatigue may also be caused by many other factors. You may want to ask your doctor specific questions:
- Is the fatigue due to one or more of my medical problems, like cancer, heart disease, chronic lung disease, kidney disease, or HIV?
- Is the fatigue due to a complication of my medical problems, such as low blood count, infection, or chronic pain?
- Is the fatigue due to a medication I am taking?
- Is the fatigue do to stress, worry, anxiety or depression?

What May Help?
The six “E’s” to manage fatigue:
1. Evaluate: Keep a daily record of your fatigue level and activities that increase or decrease fatigue to share with your doctor.
2. Energy Saving: Find ways to organize and pace your daily activities to make you less tired. Do important tasks when you have more energy and be sure to rest between activities.
3. Exercise: Too much bedrest can make you feel more tired. Simple exercise like walking or stretching can give you more energy.
4. Energy Building: Some activities, like listening to music or playing games and cards, can help reduce fatigue and build mental energy.
5. Easing Stress: Chronic stress can make it harder to sleep and add to fatigue. Ask your doctor for a referral to a social worker or psychologist who can teach you relaxation exercises that can reduce stress and improve rest or sleep.
When your symptoms are managed, you will:

- Enjoy activities and have more energy
- Enjoy family and friends
- Feel less stress and anxiety
- Get better sleep at night
- Have a better quality of life

This educational material is provided by the Palliative Care Project, a partnership between Community Care of Brooklyn and the MJHS Institute for Innovation in Palliative Care.

© Copyright 2016 MJHS