FATIGUE

Fatigue is the most common side effect of cancer treatment and can be overwhelming. It is the feeling of being “worn out” or having no energy. Fatigue can result in increased sleeping, lack of desire to do normal activities, feeling tired even after sleeping, and difficulty concentrating.

Factors adding to fatigue include depression, anemia, poor nutrition, cancer treatment, decreased activity and lack of sleep.

Getting Enough Rest

- Make sure that you get enough rest and sleep.
- Plan rest periods to help you conserve energy for important activities.
- Schedule your activities throughout the day rather than all at once.
- Keep a record to find out the link between fatigue and treatments. You may be able to predict when periods of fatigue occur and plan rest periods or light activities at those times.
- Fatigue is temporary. After treatment is completed, the tiredness will gradually disappear. You will probably return to normal activities within a few months.

Exercise

- Exercise during treatment has been shown to reduce fatigue. Engage in light activity.
- A 5 minute walk a couple times each day may help relieve fatigue.
- Try exercises that can be done while sitting or lying down such as range of motion exercises.

Food

- Eat small frequent meals and drink plenty of fluids.
- Try soups and shakes if it easier to drink rather than to eat solid food. Our dietitian may advise you on how to maintain your nutrition during cancer treatment.

Getting Help

- It is important not force yourself to do more than you can manage. Let others help with meals, housework and errands.
- If you are feeling depressed, speak to a friend or counselor or attend one of our support groups. Social workers are available to assist you and offer resources.
- Call your doctor if you are unable to get out of bed for more than a 24-hour period, if you experience confusion or a progressive worsening of fatigue.