



# Advice for Managing Myeloma-Related Fatigue

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**Cindy Chmielewski:**

How about fatigue? Anybody have ways that they manage fatigue or help reduce fatigue?

**Steve Simpson:**

Kind of a weird one. Everybody again being fatigued comes and goes, and for me I guess it's more or less how much I've done during the day. Again I'm—before this all started I was a hyperfit individual, 52, six days a week in the gym or whatever and, of course you can't give that up, and that's been a struggle. I'm finally back in at about that pace. That will fatigue me out. And to be honest with you for me now I haven't been back to work, started, so we're going on close to three years now. I'm trying to get back, but I guess the only way I can say this is you learn to listen to your body maybe a little better than you did before. I'm always 110 percent, 110 miles an hour, it's just how I'm wired, and you can't do that anymore, so now you start feeling that fatigue point, you almost got to just cave in and take a break.

I'm not a person to take naps in the afternoon unless it's one of those things where like over the recent past I can't control it, but just got to learn to listen to yourself. If it's time to take a break, you take a break. I don't know what else to say because sleeping on a regular schedule is virtually impossible. It doesn't happen anymore. I hope someday it does, but even with a CPAP I'm lucky to get five, six hours at best in a given night. And, of course, steroid days forget it. You're lucky to get two or three over the course of a couple days.

But for me again it's just listen to what your body is telling you, and if it's telling you better slow down, slow down. Because again if you don't, we all know that that's going to get you in the end, the stress, the fatigue. There are so many things that we don't—we didn't focus on prior, at least I didn't, they've now become a point to where if you don't you're going to get sick. And obviously we all know that getting sick is the last thing we want because that just multiplies to something we don't want to deal with. So it's just kind of one of those things.

But exercise I think is one of those that for me kind of helps with that because you start pushing yourself, you build the endurance, build that ability to do a few more things or more than you maybe were doing before. It's the same

thing as after transplant, get out and walk, get out and move. I can remember after transplant if I was lucky to get two or three block is in on a walk that was good at the time, but at least it was something. You know, you had to build that stamina, you had to build that part of it back up. It's a continual process. You've got to keep going.

**Cindy Chmielewski:**

Right. So listening to your body, taking a break when you need to. I think that's great advice. Building up your stamina with a little bit of exercise at a time. Anybody else, ways of dealing with fatigue?

**Melissa Vaughn:**

As a therapist for a long time and actually working with patients it was interesting to be a patient myself, an interesting experience. And something that I'd always counsel patients to do was to exercise and to eat right. And before my multiple myeloma, before I was diagnosed that's what I did, and even back then it had an impact on how my quality of life was. And even as a multiple myeloma patient I realized how important those two things really are even as a patient and how I had to kind of eat my own words and really battle through the fatigue because that was probably one of my number one and most difficult symptoms was fatigue. And so even though I didn't feel like it many days, just getting up and walking.

And also I'll put in a plug for physical therapy because that's the realm I work in, and they work closely with your doctor, and they can devise a treatment plan based on your precautions, contraindications, things like that of that nature where you can exercise safely, and they can develop a treatment plan for you. They can also issue braces and things like that if that's what you need to exercise. But I truly believe that that can increase your quality of life, those two things. Post-transplant, pre-transplant, during multiple myeloma.

**Cindy Chmielewski:**

I agree. Unfortunately, I was not one of those most fit people like Steve was prior to my transplant, prior to my diagnosis, but I now know that whenever I'm starting to battle fatigue or not feeling right I go back and I look at what I was eating, if I'm not doing any exercise, and that usually correlates with it. Even if I just get up and go outside, take a walk, being outside in that fresh air, maybe doing some mindfulness out there, enjoying nature, just trying to get my mind off maybe all those stresses because stress sometimes causes that fatigue too, you know. And eating right, eating food that provides you with energy, you know, I think those two are really good points in dealing with fatigue. Any other?

**Jill Zitzewitz:**

Related to exercise, so I did do physical therapy before I was diagnosed because of the compression fractures, and that definitely helped with building my core strength, and I kind of kept resorting to those exercises during the transplant process. But I was a little bit nervous about exercising vigorously because I didn't know how strong my bones were, I was afraid of—and so I actually joined the Livestrong program at the YMCA and I found that to be incredibly—I mean, I'm doing Zumba and things I wouldn't have done before. A lot more cardio, because you can do it in a modified way. They can work with you, we do it—and I learned how to do yoga, I learned how to trust my body more and take breaks when I need to, not to overdo it, you know, to set my own limits.

So I found that that was really helpful for me. It was also a support. There were other cancer survivors there, and it got me back exercising, and now I'm also back in the lab. I'm a scientist, so I'm on my feet most of the day in the lab, but it actually helps. It doesn't make me more tired. It helps me to keep moving.

**Cindy Chmielewski:**

I agree. I was part of the Livestrong at the Y program, and it really did help because you have the one-on-one trainer to help modify those exercises just for you. So I felt more comfortable than just joining a gym. And, like Melissa said, I went to physical therapy because I wanted to start exercising but I was afraid because I had so many compression

fractures. What I should be doing, you know. I didn't want to hurt myself anymore. I lost three-and-a-half inches in height throughout this process, you know, and when I went to the physical therapy fortunately we were able to do like aqua therapy in a pool and learning how to do Zumba in the pool and just many resistance exercises, so I didn't have all that stress on the body.

And from the physical therapy I was able then to join the local pool and take part in some of those classes that weren't putting the stress on my bones in the very beginning. I agree physical therapy could really help with getting to exercise, and then once you start exercising you might gain some more energy and the fatigue may go away.

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