

# Boosting your energy

Information about managing weakness  
and fatigue



**Marie  
Curie**

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Care and support  
through terminal illness

Weakness and fatigue can be a problem if you're living with a terminal illness and may affect you in different ways. If you're feeling tired, there are some things you can try to help you conserve energy. Many of them involve making simple changes to your routine.

This leaflet includes information about:

- weakness and fatigue
- managing fatigue
- how we can help
- useful organisations
- further information



You can find more information about common symptoms and how to manage at [mariecurie.org.uk/symptoms](https://mariecurie.org.uk/symptoms) or call the Marie Curie Support Line on **0800 090 2309\***.

## About weakness and fatigue

Fatigue is a feeling of extreme tiredness, weakness or lack of energy. It isn't related to how much activity you do and isn't necessarily improved by rest or sleep. Fatigue can affect all aspects of life. People with severe fatigue describe it as paralysing.

Long-term illnesses, including cancer, can cause fatigue and so can some of the treatments used for these conditions, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy. Most people with a terminal illness will experience fatigue at some point, but little is known about how it develops or why symptoms persist.

\* Calls from landlines are free, but there may be a charge if you're calling from a mobile. Check with your mobile provider for details. Calls from any type of phone will be free from 1 July 2015.

## Boosting your energy

The common signs of fatigue are:

- problems sleeping
- problems with your short-term memory
- having a feeling of heavy limbs
- feeling drained and as if you have no energy
- difficulty completing simple tasks, such as washing and dressing
- difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- a lack of motivation and not enjoying the things you usually do, like walking or reading

## Managing fatigue

### Saving your energy

It can help to plan activities for when you feel most energetic and to avoid doing things you don't need to do. Taking short daytime naps or rests and sitting down to do tasks, like preparing meals or gardening, can also help conserve energy.

Rest and sleep are important, but try to balance this with the amount of activity you do to avoid affecting your night time sleep. Doing the same sorts of things at the same time each day, and getting up and going to bed at the same time every day may help you to feel less tired and improve your sleep at night. Make sure your bed is as comfortable as possible.

### Physical activity

It's good to stay as active as possible without overdoing things. This might include physiotherapy or exercises to build your strength. Some moderate exercise, like walking around the garden or to the end of the road, will improve your circulation and may help you to feel better.





Our leaflet about exercise has some more suggestions that you may find useful. Call **0800 090 2309\*** to order a copy for free.

## Wellbeing therapies and diet

Complementary therapies, like massage or meditation, may help with feelings of stress and tension and help to increase energy levels.

Having a well-balanced diet, including plenty of fluids and energy-giving foods like high calorie snacks or dairy foods, may also help increase your energy. Eating little and often can help when normal-sized meals feel too much to cope with. Make sure you let family and friends know how you feel, so they can support you.



For more information about complementary therapies and eating well, please visit **[mariecurie.org.uk/wellbeing](https://mariecurie.org.uk/wellbeing)**

## How we can help

We help everyone affected by a terminal illness get the information and support they need, whether you have an illness yourself or you're a family member or friend.

### Marie Curie Support Line

**0800 090 2309\***

Ask questions and find support. Open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. (Your call may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.)

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### Marie Curie Community

**[community.mariecurie.org.uk](https://community.mariecurie.org.uk)**

For anyone affected by terminal illness to share experiences and support each other. Available 24 hours a day.

### More information and further support

We also have an extensive range of information materials available to view online or in print. Visit **[mariecurie.org.uk/help](https://mariecurie.org.uk/help)** where you can also find film guides, information about our services, and links to further support.

### Marie Curie Nurses

Marie Curie Nurses work night and day, in people's homes across the UK, providing hands-on care and vital emotional support. If you're living with a terminal illness, they can help you stay surrounded by the people you care about most, in the place where you're most comfortable.

**[mariecurie.org.uk/nurses](https://mariecurie.org.uk/nurses)**

### Marie Curie Hospices

Our hospices offer the reassurance of specialist care and support, in a friendly, welcoming environment, for people living with a terminal illness and their loved ones – whether you're staying in the hospice, or just coming in for the day.

**[mariecurie.org.uk/hospices](https://mariecurie.org.uk/hospices)**

### Marie Curie Helper

We know the little things can make a big difference when you're living with a terminal illness. That's where our trained Helper volunteers come in. They can visit you regularly to have a chat to over a cup of tea, help you get to an appointment or just listen when you need a friendly ear.

**[mariecurie.org.uk/helper](https://mariecurie.org.uk/helper)**

## Useful organisations

### **The British Complementary Medicine Association**

0845 345 5977

[bcma.co.uk](http://bcma.co.uk)

A membership organisation listing complementary medicine therapists who meet its code of ethics.

### **Carers UK**

0808 808 7777 (England, Wales and Scotland)

028 9043 9843 (Northern Ireland)

[carersuk.org](http://carersuk.org)

Provides expert advice, information and support to carers. There are links to its national services from the website homepage.

### **Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council**

020 7653 1971

[cnhc.org.uk](http://cnhc.org.uk)

An accredited voluntary regulator for complementary therapists in the UK. Find a private (paid for) therapist near you or read about the different therapies available.

### **Macmillan Cancer Support**

0808 808 00 00

[macmillan.org.uk](http://macmillan.org.uk)

Provides practical, medical and financial support for people affected by cancer.

### **Patient.co.uk**

[patient.co.uk](http://patient.co.uk)

A free health site which contains over 4,000 health information leaflets, a wellbeing centre, a free health check, and forums where you can discuss your experiences with others.



## Did you find this information useful?

If you have any feedback about the information in this leaflet, please email us at [review@mariecurie.org.uk](mailto:review@mariecurie.org.uk) or call the Marie Curie Support Line on **0800 090 2309\***.

## Further information

This leaflet was produced by Marie Curie's Information and Support team. It has been reviewed by health and social care professionals and people affected by terminal illness.

If you'd like the list of sources used to create this information, please email [review@mariecurie.org.uk](mailto:review@mariecurie.org.uk) or call the Marie Curie Support Line on **0800 090 2309\***.

## Notice

The information in this publication is provided for the benefit and personal use of people with a terminal illness, their families and carers.

This information is provided as general guidance for information purposes only. It should not be considered as medical or clinical advice, or used as a substitute for personalised or specific advice from a qualified medical practitioner. For legal, financial or other matters covered by this information, you should also consider seeking specific professional advice about your personal circumstances.

While we try to ensure that this information is accurate, we do not accept any liability arising from its use. Please refer to our website for our full terms and conditions.

## Marie Curie – what we're here for

We're here for people living with any terminal illness, and their families. We offer expert care, guidance and support to help them get the most from the time they have left.

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**[mariecurie.org.uk/help](http://mariecurie.org.uk/help)**

You can also visit **[community.mariecurie.org.uk](http://community.mariecurie.org.uk)** to share experiences and find support by talking to people in a similar situation.

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