

### Fatigue

**Definition:** A state of increased discomfort and decreased efficiency resulting from prolonged or excessive exertion; a loss of power or capacity to respond to stimulation.

**Consequences:** Fatigue can be a barrier to buying food, cooking meals, and even eating. When you do not eat because you are too tired to buy or make food, your body does not get the energy it needs to keep you going and to keep your immune strong.

**First:** Speak with your doctor immediately so you can work together to solve the problem that is causing fatigue. Be informed about your treatment. Meet regularly with a registered dietitian who can address any nutrition related concerns you may be experiencing.

#### Causes of Fatigue

- HIV itself because the body uses a lot of energy to fight the virus
- Some anti-HIV drugs, including AZT, which slow the production of red blood cells (which are responsible for carrying oxygen around the body)
- Decreased food intake or poor absorption in the gut may cause low levels of vitamins and minerals in the blood
- Stress, depression, and/or disrupted sleep patterns
- Low levels of testosterone
- Lactic acidosis, a side-effect of the nucleoside analogue class of anti-HIV drugs (AZT, d4T, etc)
- Anemia (decreased production of red blood cells) caused by the HIV virus, certain medications or chemotherapy
- Other infections that you may get as a result of your decreased immune system function

#### Nutrition Tips to Help You Deal with Fatigue

- Eat small, frequent meals packed with nutrients, for example: ½ roast beef sandwich with cheese
- Stock and eat easy-to-prepare canned or frozen foods, cooked cereals, pastas with ready-to-eat sauce and others things you like so they are available with little effort
- Make a list of foods that are easy to prepare so you have ideas on those days when you are just too tired to think
- Cook large quantities on days you feel good and freeze individual portion sizes in small containers that you can thaw and cook in the microwave on a later date
- Add left-over meat, poultry, canned fish or eggs to ready-to-eat soup
- Make homemade shakes with regular or soy milk, fruit, and frozen yogurt
- Especially take your daily multivitamin if you have a hard time eating a variety of foods
- Decrease your consumption of coffee—it may actually add to the problem of fatigue
- Shop by phone and have your groceries delivered or ask a friend to shop for you
- Order take-out restaurant food or have a friend or relative to bring you food
- Sign up with community food programs like Project Angel Food, “Meals on Wheels,” homecare services, or enlist volunteers, family and friends to help you shop, cook, and clean up
- Eat with nice people in a soothing and supportive atmosphere.

For more information or to sign up for a nutrition class call:

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