

FIGURE 2.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER TIP SHEET: PREVENTING AND MANAGING FATIGUE

Cancer-related fatigue is characterized by a distressing, persistent, subjective sense of tiredness or exhaustion related to cancer or cancer treatment that is not proportional to recent activity and interferes with usual functioning. The symptoms affect physical, psychological, and social functioning, and can cause significant distress for patients and caregivers. Fatigue can become chronic, leading to isolation, loneliness, and deconditioning of the body.

SYMPTOMS OF FATIGUE

- Physical: An unrelenting feeling of tiredness or exhaustion that is not relieved by sleep
- Psychological: Absentmindedness, forgetfulness, difficulty communicating, unpleasant emotions, mental exhaustion, and impaired concentration and memory
- Social: Fatigue that limits ability to socialize, impairs relationships, and leads to feeling isolated or lonely

Always report your symptoms to your healthcare team.

ASSESSMENT

Check vital signs, testosterone levels, thyroid levels, complete blood count with differential, electrolytes, and liver and kidney function; check for hyponatremia and other signs of dehydration (skin turgor); assess for depression, general appearance, and affect; check for cognitive impairments and infection; assess for muscle weakness; and involve caregivers and/or family members with assessments and interventions.

MANAGING THE SYMPTOMS

The following nonpharmacologic suggestions may help with symptoms of fatigue: Exercise, cognitive behavioral interventions, sleep interventions, ginseng, management of other symptoms, massage/aromatherapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, multicomponent rehabilitative intervention, psychoeducational interventions, and yoga.

Note. Based on information from Oncology Nursing Society, 2017.