

The healthcare professional view

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Fatigue is recognised as one of the most distressing symptoms of myeloma and side-effects of its treatment. Although it is challenging to treat this symptom, and no standard agreed assessment tool to help measure it exists, there are things that healthcare professionals can do which can help. A nurse's role, in particular, is to be proactive in helping patients lessen the impact fatigue has on their day-to-day life, such as planning, prioritising and pacing themselves.

Regular blood tests (looking at your full blood count and especially your haemoglobin reading) can provide useful information. If you are anaemic

you will probably benefit from a blood transfusion or a course of erythropoietin (EPO) injections, both of which can help raise your haemoglobin.

Treating bacterial infections promptly with antibiotics can help to reduce fatigue. Certain types of pain-killers - particularly those which are morphine based - can have a sedative effect and if you are not taking the appropriate dose for you, this can worsen existing fatigue. So it's very important that you are closely monitored if you're on this type of pain-killer. Equally, some anti-myeloma treatments may cause side-effects similar to fatigue (such as thalidomide, which can make you feel sluggish) so we

would recommend that you take these around bed time.

Complementary therapies such as reflexology can help with fatigue, helping to increase energy levels, induce a deep state of relaxation and encourage sleep and relieve pain, including the pain associated with peripheral neuropathy. The theory is that the foot mirrors areas of the body including the head, spine, limbs and internal organs. As pressure is applied on specific reflexes within the feet it treats the corresponding part of the body. This nurturing treatment can improve general wellbeing, aid relaxation, and reduce stress and tension.



“I will always discuss fatigue with patients, and encourage them to report it to me or the doctor so that we can try to help. I would recommend that patients affected by fatigue reduce their caffeine and alcohol intake, up their water, fruit and vegetable intake and take regular gentle exercise. They also need to take time during the day to rest and accept any help on offer to manage daily chores such as shopping, cooking and cleaning.”