



# Working While in Treatment

**LIVING WITH CANCER**



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# WORKING WHILE IN TREATMENT

One of the many decisions you will have to make is whether to keep working or take a leave while undergoing treatment. You're not alone if you find this decision very hard. For some people, giving up work leads to serious money worries or self-esteem challenges. For others, time away from work can be a relief. You'll need to talk to your employer, healthcare team, family and friends. Your decision will depend on the type of treatment you're receiving, the stage of your cancer, your overall health and the kind of work that you do

## Talk to Your Employer

If you're working while receiving treatment for cancer, be sure to discuss your working arrangements with your employer. Even if you don't need to take time off work, it can be helpful to know what your options are. It may be possible to organize modified duties or a flexible schedule that will work around your needs. Some examples of working arrangements that employers could look into would be: giving extra days off, working part-time, or working from home. If you decide to take a leave from work while you have treatment for cancer, give your employer as much notice as possible. Be open, honest and realistic about your expectations of the employer. Make sure you understand what they expect of you. This can help minimize stress as your treatment continues.

## Plan for Fatigue

Chronic fatigue is a major side effect of cancer treatment. Chronic fatigue is different than simply being tired. It can be excessive and constant, may not get better with rest, may persist over time and can interfere with the activities of daily living. Along with symptoms that you might expect such as a lack of energy and trouble getting up in the morning, you may have trouble sleeping, muscle pain, difficulty concentrating or thinking clearly. You may be out of breath after doing small tasks, feel anxious or depressed or lose interest in things you usually enjoy. Your body is using a lot of energy while you're being treated. Everyone's experience is different, but many people treated for cancer find that they must prioritize their activities in order to make sure they do what is most important to them.

## THE 4 P'S

**Plan** your day the night before.

Focus on what is most important and plan around when you usually have the most energy.

**Prioritize** the most important tasks for the day. Eliminate low priority tasks and ask for help where you can.

**Pace** yourself. Monitor your energy levels, and give yourself space to rest.

**Position** yourself to best facilitate your recovery as suggested by your medical team.

## TOP 10 TIPS TO SAVE ENERGY

1. Take time for yourself and your own needs.
2. Don't overload your day. Reassess and reprioritize what you do. This can mean talking to your employer or supervisor about adjusting your job responsibilities, your hours of work, or both.
3. Learn to manage your stress
4. Be as physically active as you can.
5. When you are active, take frequent, short rest breaks.
6. Eat a well-balanced diet and drink plenty of fluids.
7. Learn to delegate tasks to others both at home and at work. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
8. Look for new ways of doing things so they can be less physically or mentally taxing.
9. Plan your day to take advantage of when you have the most energy
10. Share your feelings with your family members, friends, or caregivers, or join a support group.

# HELPFUL TIPS IF YOU WORK WHILE IN TREATMENT



## PLAN TREATMENT TIME

Plan your chemotherapy treatments late in the day or right before the weekend to allow yourself time to recover, if possible.



## ASK FOR HELP

Getting help at home can mean more energy for work. Certain daily chores could be divided among friends and family members who have offered to help.



## MAKE WORK FLEXIBLE

Explore work options like working from home some days. This can help reduce fatigue and allow you to take care of yourself more easily.



## SHARE WITH COLLEAGUES

Unless there is a reason not to, let your co-workers know about your situation. You might find they are a great source of support. They may even be able to help you come up with better ways to manage your work during this time.



## BE OPEN

Keep your supervisor up to date on how well your schedule or other work-related changes are working for you.