



Tips for Managing Symptoms

Table of Contents

Common Symptoms

• Anxiety	3
• Constipation	4
• Decreased Appetite	6
• Diarrhea	7
• Fatigue	9
• Nausea and Vomiting	10
• Numbness and Tingling	12
• Pain	14
• Physical Activity	16
• Rash	17
• Shortness of Breath	18
• Trouble Drinking Fluids	20
• Well-being	21

Less Common Symptoms

• Bleeding	22
• Cough.	23
• Depression.	24
• Difficulty Concentrating.	25
• Difficulty Swallowing	26
• Dizziness.	27
• Feeling Discouraged	28
• Fever	29
• Hand-foot Syndrome	30
• Headache	32
• Heartburn	34
• Heart Palpitations	36
• Insomnia.	37
• Itching	39
• Mouth or Throat Sores	40
• Swelling	42
• Trouble Urinating	43
• Wheezing	44

Tips for Managing Anxiety



Things you can do on your own

Talk about your anxiety:

- Talk to friends and family.
- Share concerns with your care team and ask questions.
- Ask your care team for a referral to meet with a social worker, psychologist, counselor, or therapist.

Plan your day:

- Get enough sleep and try to follow a regular sleep schedule.
- Make time to exercise. Even 30 minutes of moderate walking can help boost your mood and help reduce worry.
- Cut down on caffeine (including coffee, tea, and sodas), and avoid drinking alcohol.
- Set a specific “worry time” and limit your worrying to a 30-minute time block within your day. Don’t schedule this before bed.

Try meditation and relaxation exercises:

- Try deep-breathing, guided imagery, and mindfulness exercises.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications for anxiety.

- Medicines such as lorazepam (Ativan) or alprazolam (Xanax) can help provide relief from anxiety in the short term but may not be good long-term solutions.
- Antidepressants are better long-term treatments for chronic anxiety.



When to call your care team for help

- If anxiety affects your breathing
- If you feel like your heart is pounding or racing
- If you have troubling thoughts that you can’t get rid of
- If you are using drugs or alcohol to cope
- If you feel despair or are having thoughts of hurting yourself



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/anxiety or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We’re here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Constipation



Things you can do on your own

Keep track of your constipation.

- Write down when you have bowel movements.
- Notice and write down any relationship between your diet and bowel movements.

Stay hydrated.

- Drink 6-8 cups of fluids, such as water, per day.
- Drink hot liquids (like water with lemon).
- Drink prune juice or senna tea.

Stay active and make changes to reduce your symptoms.

- Put your feet on a footstool when sitting on the toilet.
- Do light exercise (like walking).
- Talk to your care team about what foods you should eat or avoid.
- Be aware of medicines you take that may cause constipation, including:
 - Anti-nausea medicines like ondansetron (Zofran) or granisetron (Kytril)
 - Opioid pain medicines like oxycodone or morphine

Understand what might be causing constipation.

- Use of some medicines like opioids
- A change in diet or medicines
- Constipation can sometimes be an early sign that your bowels are not working well (bowel blockage or obstruction).



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) constipation medications.

- OTC constipation medications work for mild to moderate constipation. You can buy these medications at your local drugstore. Take as directed on the package. Examples include:
 - Peri-Colace
 - Senna (like Senokot or Smooth Move tea)
 - Bisacodyl (like Dulcolax)
 - Polyethylene glycol (MiraLAX)
- Do not take fiber supplements (like Metamucil) without checking with your care team.
- If your blood counts are normal, you may consider trying a suppository (like glycerin or bisacodyl) or an enema (like saline, mineral oil, or phosphate).



When to call your care team for help

- If after trying these tips, your constipation stays the same or gets worse
- If there is blood in your stool, or the blood is becoming more often
- If you are unable to pass gas for a day or more
- If your belly area is swollen and feels hard
- If you have worsening belly pain
- If you think you have a large amount of stool stuck in your rectum
- If you develop nausea and vomiting in addition to constipation



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/constipation or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Decreased Appetite



Things you can do on your own

Adjust your eating habits.

- Eat small meals throughout the day, rather than 3 larger meals.
- Eat foods that you enjoy.
- Some foods may not taste the same during cancer treatment. Try citrus or other stronger flavors that may be more appealing.
- Eat high-calorie, high-protein foods, including beans, meats, fish, avocado, nuts, high-fat yogurt, cheese, peanut butter, or eggs.
- Try shakes or smoothies throughout the day.
- Try meal replacements such as Carnation Instant Breakfast, Boost, or Ensure.

Develop strategies to feel hungry.

- Meet with a nutritionist to discuss other ways to treat your poor appetite.
- Incorporate daily exercise (like going for a walk) into your routine.
- Move your bowels regularly, as constipation can make appetite worse.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have not been able to eat or drink anything for 12 or more hours
- If you are having other symptoms that make it difficult to eat, such as:
 - Mouth sores
 - Tongue pain
 - A whitish discharge in your mouth
 - Belly pain
 - Trouble or pain with swallowing
 - Nausea, vomiting, or constipation



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/decreased-appetite or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Diarrhea



Things you can do on your own

Keep track of your diarrhea.

- Write down how many bowel movements you have each day.

Stay hydrated, and change your diet to lessen your symptoms.

- Drink at least 6-8 cups of clear fluids, such as water, daily to prevent fluid loss.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, milk, and artificial sweeteners.
- Avoid greasy, fatty, and fried foods.
- Eat small, frequent meals throughout the day instead of 3 big meals.
- Eat foods that help diarrhea like bananas, melon, rice, applesauce, and/or toast.
- Drink sports drinks such as Gatorade to replace your potassium.

Keep the skin around your anus healthy.

- If your skin is getting irritated after bowel movements, gently wipe yourself with baby wipes and then apply barrier creams, such as zinc oxide, Vaseline, or diaper ointments.
- Add 1-2 tablespoons of baking soda to a warm tub of water and soak your bottom.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) constipation medications.

- OTC medications can help with diarrhea. You can buy these at your local drugstore. Take as directed. Examples include Imodium.
- IF YOU ARE TAKING AN IMMUNOTHERAPY DRUG, **DO NOT** TAKE OTC MEDICINES FOR DIARRHEA.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications and treatments for diarrhea, such as:

- Lomotil (or atropine-diphenoxylate)
- If you have trouble with pills, tincture of opium or DTO may be an option



When to call your care team for help

- If you have a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher along with the diarrhea
- If your stools are watery
- If your diarrhea gets worse, not better, after following these tips
- If you are having signs of fluid loss, including:
 - Feeling weak, dizzy, or like you will pass out
 - Having dark yellow or very little urine
 - Having a dry mouth/being thirsty
- If you are waking up in the middle of the night with diarrhea
- If you have an accident, or lose control of your bowels
- If there is blood in your stool
- If your stools are black in color



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/diarrhea or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Fatigue



Things you can do on your own

Move your body. Exercise is one of the best ways to treat fatigue.

- Try to be active for at least 15-30 minutes every day. Walking is a good option.
- If 30 minutes of exercise is too hard, break it up into three, 10-minute sessions.

Focus on sleep.

- Try to go to sleep at the same time each evening.
- Create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- Get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Limit daytime sleeping to a few short naps and spend most time out of bed.

Plan your day.

- Make a list of the things that are most important for you to do that day and focus on them.
- Spread activities out throughout the day, making sure you have time to rest in between.
- Be kind to yourself. Be “OK” with it if you can’t get through everything on your list; most things can wait until tomorrow.

Keep a diary to track your fatigue and identify what makes it better or worse.

- Avoid drinking caffeine in the afternoon and evening.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Drink plenty of fluids (at least 6-8 cups per day).
- Try integrative therapies such as meditation, acupuncture, yoga, or tai chi.

Ask for help.

- Ask for help with activities that are tiring, especially household chores.
- People often want to help, but don’t know what to do. Give friends and family members specific ideas of tasks that would be helpful to you.
- Pick a trusted friend or family member to help organize friends to assist with household chores and errands.



When to call your care team for help

- If after trying these tips, your fatigue does not get better or it gets worse
- If you feel confused or dizzy
- If you fall and hurt yourself



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/fatigue or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We’re here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Nausea and Vomiting



Things you can do on your own

Understand what might be making you feel sick.

- Write down when your nausea is worst in your cancer treatment cycle.
- Record what causes your nausea.
- Make sure you understand what medicines to take and when to take them.

Eat and drink well.

- Eat small, frequent meals, and supplement them with meal replacement drinks, such as Boost or Ensure.
- Drink 6-8 cups of fluids, such as water, per day.
- Avoid greasy or fatty foods, like fried foods.
- Eat bland foods.
- Try sucking on hard candies made with lemon or ginger.
- Stay away from strong smells.

Get comfortable.

- Wear loose-fitting clothes.
- Do mind-body exercises or try deep breathing exercises.
- Try acupuncture.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications for nausea.

- You might have to try a few different nausea medicines before you find the one that works best for you.
- Your care team might recommend that you take your anti-nausea medication:
 - On a schedule to prevent nausea, even if you aren't feeling sick at the moment
 - Only when you feel sick (usually written "as needed" on the prescription bottle)
- You may find that you need to take medications on certain days of your cancer treatment cycle.
- If you are not able to keep your anti-nausea medication down, then you can take them in a different way, such as by IV, suppository, or dissolving tablet.



When to call your care team for help

- If you are taking anti-nausea medication as prescribed and it is not working, or it stops working
- If there is blood, or something that looks like coffee grounds in your vomit
- If you cannot keep anything (food, water, or medicines) down because of your vomiting
- If you go a day without drinking any fluids
- If you have not passed any gas for a day or more
- If you have not had a bowel movement for 2 or more days
- If you have severe nausea or vomiting and new belly pain
- If you have fluid loss or don't have enough fluid in your body. Signs of fluid loss include:
 - Feeling weak, dizzy, or like you may pass out
 - Having dark yellow or very little pee
 - Having a dry mouth/being thirsty

When you call your care team, it helps to have a diary listing of what medicines you have been taking and notes about how much you have been able to drink to stay hydrated.



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/nauseavomiting or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Numbness and Tingling



Things you can do on your own

Stay active.

- Do some light exercise, such as walking.
- Ask your care team about starting physical therapy.
- Try relaxation exercises or meditation.

Get comfortable.

- Try acupuncture or massage.
- Wear loose-fitting clothes.
- Protect your feet.
- Try using special shoe inserts or shoes with rubber soles.
- Avoid walking barefoot.

Stay safe.

- Avoid extreme temperatures (too hot or too cold), because you could burn or freeze your skin.
- Wear gloves or use an oven mitt when reaching into the refrigerator or freezer to protect your hands from the cold.
- Do not drive if you cannot feel the pedals with your feet.
- Avoid injury at home by keeping floors clear of tripping hazards, using handrails for balance, and keeping walkways well lit.
- Use a thermometer to check water temperatures (bath water should be less than 120°F).



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) medications or supplements for painful neuropathy.

- Numbing cream or patch on the painful area (like lidocaine)
- OTC pain medicines or anti-inflammatory drugs (ibuprofen)
- Folic acid and vitamins B, D, and E



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications for your neuropathy. No medications are completely helpful at stopping neuropathy and all have side effects.

- Before starting treatment, discuss the risks and benefits with your care team to decide which medication is right for you.
- In many cases, numbness and tingling start getting better after you stop taking cancer treatments.
- Be sure to tell your care team about your numbness and tingling at every visit.
 - They may be able to make some changes to your cancer treatment that can help.
 - They may be able to tell if the numbness and tingling are caused by nerve injury.



When to call your care team for help

- If your neuropathy symptoms are making it hard for you to complete regular daily activities, like getting dressed
- If you have changes in vision or loss of hearing



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/numbness-tingling or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.



Things you can do on your own

Talk about your pain with your care team.

- Talking with your care team about your pain will help find ways to improve control of it.
- Write down information about your pain so you can share it with your care team. Keep track of:
 - Where it is located
 - What it feels like (sharp, dull, throbbing, aching, burning, shooting, etc.)
 - How bad it is on a scale of 1 to 10
 - When it happens and how long it lasts
 - What makes it better or worse
 - What activities it interferes with (walking, eating, sleeping, etc.)
 - What medications help it, and how well they work
 - Write down your pain level on a scale of 1 to 10 before taking a medication. Take the medication and wait an hour. Write down your pain level on a scale of 1 to 10 again. Share this information with your care team.

Ask your care team if physical therapy might help.

- Sometimes people are afraid to move because of their pain. This fear and inactivity can make pain worse. A physical therapist may help you find safe ways to move and can help find the right exercise plan for you.

Consider complementary and integrative therapies.

- [Complementary and integrative therapies](#) are used alongside your medical treatments. They may help to lessen the side effects of cancer or treatment. Some examples include acupuncture, tai chi, yoga, or meditation.

Other remedies may help, too.

- Try putting hot or cold packs on the area where the pain is present.
- Do things to take your mind off pain, like watching TV (avoid stressful shows/movies), reading, listening to music, or engaging in a hobby or activity you enjoy. You may need to modify the hobby to fit your current abilities.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) pain medications.

- OTC pain medications may help with **mild to moderate pain**. You can buy these medications at your local drugstore. Examples include acetaminophen (Tylenol) and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) and aspirin.
- Take them as directed on the package, unless you have been told they are not safe for you or if your care team tells you to take them differently.
- If you have ulcers, or kidney or bleeding problems, your care team may ask you to limit ibuprofen.
- If you have liver problems, your care team may ask you to limit acetaminophen.
- These medications do *not* make you sleepy and do *not* cause constipation.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team if you need opioid pain medications.

- **Opioids** can be very helpful for **moderate to severe pain**.
- They can cause drowsiness; you should avoid driving or activities that require you to be alert while taking them.
- They can also cause constipation; most people need to take laxatives or stool softeners along with opiates.
- Opiates that provide relief within 30 minutes and last for a few hours are called short-acting opiates.
- Long-acting opiates can control pain for 8-12 hours but may not help acute pain.
- Opiates are highly effective for treating pain; however, if they are used improperly, they can be addictive. Talk to your care team about how to use opiates safely.
- Always write down the doses of opiates you take and your levels of pain. Bring this information to your appointments.



When to call your care team for help

- If your pain gets worse
- If the pain is new or sudden
- If you are not sure how to take your medications



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/pain or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Physical Activity



Receiving cancer treatment can take a toll on your physical strength and fitness. Try to stay as active as you can, even if you cannot do everything you used to do. The longer a person stays inactive, the more strength and fitness they can lose. You may have to adapt your exercise routines, but it is important to continue moving every day.

Exercise is safe during cancer treatment, unless your care team has told you otherwise. Researchers have found that light exercise (like walking) several times per week can greatly benefit a person's physical function, mood, energy, sleep, and pain. If you need help finding the right exercise plan for you, talk to your care team, or ask to meet with a physical therapist.



Things you can do on your own

- Plan an exercise program you are likely to follow during treatment.
- Keep it safe and fun.
- Ask your friends, family, and coworkers to exercise with you.
- If you have any health problems that might make exercising unsafe (like heart, lung, or balance problems), talk to your care team or a physical therapist before starting an exercise program.
- Work your way up slowly; this can prevent injuries and keep you from getting discouraged.
- Start with small, realistic goals that you can do without too much trouble.
- Listen to your body. On days you don't feel as well, scale back your activity level. If an activity causes pain, stop and rest. You can try again later – maybe a few short sessions.
- Stay hydrated, and drink plenty of fluids before and after you exercise.
- Try to build physical activity into your daily routine.
 - Walk around your neighborhood.
 - Park your car farther than usual from your destination (grocery store, etc.).
 - Use the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
 - Do chores or errands.
 - Wear a pedometer or tracking device and try to increase your daily steps.



When to call your care team for help

- If your ability to do things has changed in a short amount of time
- If you are unable to perform your routine daily activities, such as getting out of bed, getting dressed, or eating without help



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/physicalactivity or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Rash



Things you can do on your own

- Use mild, unscented soaps like Ivory or Dove.
- Wear sunscreen, a hat, and other protective clothing anytime you go outside.
- Take baths or showers with lukewarm (not hot) water.
- Try applying cool, moist cloths instead of scratching.
- Keep your nails trimmed and clean to avoid injury when scratching.
- Try Sarna lotion, which is available over the counter.
- Keep your skin well moisturized.
- Make sure you use clean bed linens, towels, and clothes.
- Take a picture of your rash with a smartphone and send or show it to your care team.



When to call your care team for help

- If your rash comes on quickly
- If a rash is spreading over more than half of your body
- If your rash is painful
- If you develop blisters or open sores on your body that become painful or appear infected
- If you develop a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/rash or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Shortness of Breath



Things you can do on your own

Get comfortable.

- Sit upright or in a reclined position with your feet on a footrest. Don't slouch.
- Lie down with your head propped up on several pillows, or lie down in a reclining chair, never flat.
- Try pursed-lip breathing.
 - Breathe in through your nose for 2 counts.
 - Breathe out through your pursed (whistle-shaped) lips for 4 counts.
- Rest as much as you need.

Get fresh air.

- Avoid dust, fragrances, smoke, and pollution.
- Avoid extreme temperatures.
- Try sitting near a fan.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team for a prescription medication or treatment to help you breathe better, such as:

- Oxygen
- Inhalers
- Nebulizers
- Medications that can help with severe shortness of breath, like morphine or lorazepam (Ativan)
- Treatment for anemia
- Diuretics (like Lasix)



When to call your care team for help

Your care team takes shortness of breath very seriously. Always call them if you have:

- New shortness of breath
- Shortness of breath that is worsening
- Blue or pale-looking skin, mouth, or nails
- A preexisting deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or blood clot/clotting disorder
- Symptoms of leg or arm swelling (with or without pain) in addition to shortness of breath
 - Leg or arm swelling can be a sign of a blood clot, which has a very serious side effect of causing shortness of breath (pulmonary embolism). Risk of blood clots increase after surgery, especially with long periods of being in bed. You may need a test to determine if there is a blood clot.
- Chest pain
- A new irregular heartbeat
- A new fast heartbeat
- Anxiety with shortness of breath



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/shortness-of-breath or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Trouble Drinking Fluids



Things you can do on your own

Trying alternative ways to get fluids.

- Drink a glass of water when you wake up in the morning AND right before bed at night.
- Try eating popsicles or ice chips, or sucking on hard candies like Lifesavers.
- Take frequent, small sips of liquid throughout the day.
- Try to eat foods that have a lot of fluid, like soup, melons, pudding, or Jell-O.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medicines to help you keep fluids down.

- Take medications you have been prescribed for nausea and vomiting.
- Your care team may give you some intravenous fluids.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have not been able to drink anything at all for 12 or more hours
- If you are having other symptoms that make it difficult to drink, like nausea or throwing up
- If you experience dizziness, fainting, or a fast heart rate
- If you have not peed for 12 or more hours
- If you are having signs of fluid loss, including:
 - Feeling weak, dizzy, or like you may pass out
 - Having dark or very little urine
 - Having a dry mouth and/or being thirsty
- If you are having trouble eating food
- If you have severe pain when swallowing, or if you have a feeling that what you swallow is “stuck”



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/fluids-dehydration or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Your Well-being



Cancer treatment can affect many aspects of your overall well-being, including physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially, and financially. First, know that you are not alone. Many people with cancer struggle with these issues. No matter what is impacting your well-being, know that there are resources to help you cope.



Things you can do on your own

- If physical symptoms are the main problem, contact your care team.
- Talk about your feelings with people you trust or keep a journal.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Think about specific ways that family and friends can help you.
- Join in activities that bring you joy like going to shows, concerts, or community events; reading or watching TV programs or movies that lift your spirits can help make you feel better.
- Stay active.
 - Engage in light physical activity such as easy walks, chores, or shopping.
 - Try to spend some time outdoors each day.
 - Know and reward your achievements and milestones.
- Try meditation or yoga to help you relax.
- Rotate naps and rest periods with periods of activity.
- Take care of your appearance.
 - Keep up with your normal routine of getting dressed, showering, etc.
 - Treat yourself to a haircut, massage, or manicure/pedicure.
- Eat healthy food.
- Ask your care team for a referral to meet with a resource specialist or counselor (e.g., social worker, psychologist, or therapist).



When to call your care team for help

- If you are having problems sleeping or have severe anxiety
- If you are having problems maintaining personal hygiene
- If you are spending most of your time in bed
- If you have thoughts about harming yourself or others
- If you feel out of control, overwhelmed, and are unsure how to cope



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/wellbeing or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Bleeding



Things you can do on your own

- Avoid certain medicines that cause bleeding, such as aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil), and Naprosyn.
- If you have bleeding gums, brush your teeth gently with an extra soft toothbrush.
- Use lotion or balm to prevent dry, chapped skin and lips.
- When bleeding, press down firmly on the area with a clean cloth until the bleeding stops. If possible, raise the body part that is bleeding above the level of your shoulders.
 - It may take longer than you expect, especially if you are taking blood thinners or bevacizumab (Avastin).
- Apply ice to bruised areas.
- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Wear shoes inside and outside to avoid cutting your feet.
- Avoid intense contact sports, heavy lifting, or other things that could cause injuries that bleed.



When to call your care team for help

- If the bleeding is very fast, or if it doesn't stop after about 10 minutes
- If you have blood in your vomit
- If your pee has blood clots or bright red blood in it
- If your stool is black or bloody
- If you have head or vision changes, such as severe headaches or blurry or double vision
- If you are feeling confused or very sleepy



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/bleeding or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Cough



Things you can do on your own

- Stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids – at least 6-8 cups of fluids daily.
- Try relaxation techniques and breathing exercises to control your breath.
- Avoid smoking or smoky environments.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) medications.

- OTC medications can help with your cough. You can buy these cough medications at your local drugstore. Take them as directed on the package. Examples include:
 - Decongestants and cough suppressants
 - Cough drops



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications and treatments for cough. Examples include:

- Antibiotics
- Steroids
- An oxygen machine



When to call your care team for help

- If you develop a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- If you feel extremely short of breath
- If you have chest pain with your cough
- If you have blood when you cough
- If you have mucus when you cough that is very thick, or has a green-yellow color
- If you are on cancer treatment and have a dry cough and lingering shortness of breath, as this might be a sign of inflammation in your lungs from the treatment



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/sideeffects or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Depression



Things you can do on your own

- Talk to people you trust about what you're feeling.
- Take care of yourself by asking for as much help as you need, eating well, exercising as you are able, and getting plenty of sleep.
- Set a sleep schedule, and try to stick to it. Having a regular bedtime and time to wake up helps many people feel more in control of their mood.
- Keep a journal, and write down your thoughts and feelings.
- Plan out your day, and ask for help getting things done.
- Talk to a therapist, social worker, or spiritual adviser.
- [Practice mindfulness and relaxation](#). Try yoga, tai chi, or meditation exercises such as deep-breathing, guided imagery, and progressive muscle relaxation.
- Include light exercise into your daily routine.
 - Try to be active for at least 15-30 minutes every day. Walking is a good option. If 30 minutes of exercise is too hard, break it up into shorter sessions. For example, try three 10-minute sessions.
- Try to continue with your normal daily activities.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about antidepressant medications, and try to find the regimen that works for you.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have thoughts of suicide, call 911 or your care team right away.
- You may also contact the National Suicide Hotline by calling 988.



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/depression or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Difficulty Concentrating



Things you can do on your own

- Turn off your phone, TV, radio, or other distracting background noises.
- Keep a calendar, and write important things down.
- Establish a routine, and try to do the same things at the same times every day.
- Ask someone to stay with you, or help you remember things and do things.
- Try to get 8 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Try to move around at least 3 times a day, and slowly increase the amount of exercise you do each day. Walking is a good choice for many people.
- Try meditation or mental exercises such as puzzles or games.
- Be kind to yourself. Give yourself permission to do as much or as little as you can.
- Focus on a few activities or tasks that are most important to you.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications to help.

- There are different medicines, depending on what is causing you to have difficulty concentrating. Talk to your care team to see if medication might help you.



When to call your care team for help

- If you are unable to speak or are slurring your words
- If you become confused and don't know where you are
- If you are showing signs of infection, such as a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/difficulty-concentrating or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Difficulty Swallowing



Things you can do on your own

- Ask your care team about working with a speech pathologist, who can show you ways to avoid choking.
- Avoid gagging or choking by eating soft foods like yogurt or Jell-O or drinking liquid meal replacements.
- Take small bites and chew your food well before swallowing.
- Use a straw when drinking.
- Eat small meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Drink 6-8 cups of fluids per day, preferably water.
- Sit upright when eating or drinking, and stay that way for at least an hour after you eat.
- Eat in a calm atmosphere, with no distractions. Do not talk while eating.
- Avoid fizzy drinks. They may make you feel full.
- If food does stick, don't panic. Try to relax, drink fluids, and let it pass on its own.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications or treatments to help.

- If you have an illness causing your mouth to swell, your care team may prescribe you antibiotics.
- Your care team may suggest using a tube to help you eat and drink.



When to call your care team for help

- If you are unable to eat or drink without choking or gagging
- If you have pain with swallowing
- If you have a feeling that what you swallow gets “stuck”
- If you have nausea, vomiting, mouth sores, or a white coating on your tongue
- If you have signs of fluid loss, including:
 - Feeling weak, dizzy, or like you will pass out
 - Having dark yellow or very little urine
 - Having a dry mouth or being thirsty
- If you have a fast heartbeat



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/difficulty-swallowing or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Dizziness



Things you can do on your own

- Prevent fluid loss by drinking plenty of fluids (6-8 cups daily).
- When walking, use a cane or walking stick.
- Use handrails while using stairs.
- Move slowly when standing up, walking, or changing positions.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter or prescription medications.

- Your care team may give you a prescription for medicines like prochlorperazine (Compazine) or meclizine (Antivert).



When to call your care team for help

- If you are still dizzy after taking an over-the-counter medicine
- If you have trouble speaking
- If you have trouble moving one arm
- If you have facial drooping
- If you are unable to drink fluids
- If you pass out or feel like you may pass out
- If you have signs of fluid loss, including:
 - Feeling weak, dizzy, or like you will pass out
 - Having dark yellow or very little urine



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/dizziness or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Feeling Discouraged



Things you can do on your own

- Admit how you are feeling to yourself and your loved ones.
 - Feeling discouraged, unsure, or afraid are all common emotions. It's OK to let yourself feel the way that you do.
- Talk to your friends and family about how you are feeling.
- Keep up a routine for yourself as you feel up to it:
 - Do hobbies that you enjoy.
 - Exercise.
 - Try to be active for at least 15-30 minutes every day. Walking is a good option. If 30 minutes of exercise is too hard, break it up into shorter sessions. For example, try three, 10-minute sessions.
 - Spend time with friends and family and talk by phone or computer with those far away.
 - Work as you are able.
- Speak to a social worker or therapist about your feelings.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about antidepressants or antianxiety medications.



When to call your care team for help

- If you are not eating
- If you are not drinking at least 4 glasses of fluid per day
- If you are not getting out of bed or participating in usual activities
- If you are not able to sleep
- If you have any trouble breathing
- If you are confused or forgetful
- If you have any thoughts of hurting yourself, call 911 or your care team right away



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/mentalhealth or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Fever



Fever is a temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. A temperature of 98.6°F (37°C) is normal. A fever is often a sign of an infection. Other causes are reactions to a medicine or a symptom of cancer.

People with cancer have a high risk of infection because many cancer treatments lower your white blood cell counts. White blood cells help to fight infection.



Things you can do on your own

- Buy an easy-to-use digital thermometer.
- Keep a record of your temperature readings to share with your care team.
- Do not take your temperature right after drinking hot or cold liquids.
- Stay hydrated.
 - Drink liquids such as water, fruit juice, and herbal tea.
 - Eat hydrating foods like ice pops, gelatin, and soups.
- Make sure to get plenty of rest.
- Sponge yourself with cool water on your forehead.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter medicines.

- Only take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) if directed by your care team.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have a temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher when taken by mouth
- If you become confused, forgetful, or are not making sense
- If you have sweats, chills, or feel very unwell
- If you are unable to take in enough fluids to stay hydrated



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/fever or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Hand-foot Syndrome

(Redness, Pain, and Swelling on Palms and Soles)



Things you can do on your own

- Avoid activities that put extra stress on your feet, including:
 - Long walks or running
 - Exercise that has a lot of stop-and-go action, like basketball
- Avoid activities that put extra stress on your hands, including:
 - Raking leaves or gardening
 - Shoveling
 - Hammering, or doing other manual labor
 - Washing dishes by hand
- Avoid wearing gloves, unless they are soft.
- Avoid hot water.
- Avoid allowing your skin to come into contact with harsh chemicals when cleaning.
- Protect and soothe your hands and feet.
 - Wear padded shoes.
 - Soak your feet in warm water for 20-30 minutes per day.
 - Apply ice packs to your hands or feet for 15-20 minutes at a time.
 - Keep your hands and feet moisturized by applying ointment like Aquaphor and Eucerin ointments after soaking.
- Check with your care team about whether your cancer medication doses need to be changed.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter medications. You can buy these medications at your local drugstore to help with your hand-foot syndrome. Take them as directed on the package.

- Apply a topical pain reliever such as lidocaine.
- Take a pain reliever such as acetaminophen (Tylenol).



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team if you need a prescription corticosteroid (like dexamethasone) to treat and prevent hand-foot syndrome.



When to call your care team for help

- If your hands or feet show signs of infection such as pus or bleeding
- If you cannot walk due to pain in your feet, or are unable to do other daily activities



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/hand-foot-syndrome or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Headache



Things you can do on your own

- Try to avoid situations that cause you stress and anxiety.
- Try meditations or relaxation exercises.
- Get about 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Eat a healthy diet, including fruits and vegetables.
- Drink tea or other caffeinated drinks.
- Drink enough fluids (at least 6-8 cups daily).
- Try acupuncture.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) medications. OTC pain medications may help with mild to moderate pain. You can buy them at your local drugstore. Take them as directed on the package.

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) and aspirin
- If these medications do not work, talk to your care team.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team if you need prescription medications.

- Opioids are helpful for moderate to severe pain.
- Other types of medicines that can help pain are antidepressants, antiseizure medicines, or steroids.
- Your care team may prescribe antibiotics if an infection is causing your pain.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have dizziness or feel like you will pass out
- If you have blurry vision, double vision, or have difficulty seeing normally
- If you become sensitive to lights or noises
- If you have difficulty moving or talking
- If you have had migraines before, but this feels worse than usual



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/headache or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Heartburn



Things you can do on your own

- Try to eat sitting upright.
- Do not eat anything for 2-3 hours before going to bed.
- Eat a healthy diet, filled with fruits and vegetables.
- Sit up for at least 2 hours after you eat.
- Do not lie flat when you sleep. Try propping yourself up with pillows.
- Avoid fried foods, fatty foods, chocolate, peppermint, and fizzy drinks.
- Avoid foods that have caused you heartburn in the past.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
 - Ask your care team for help if this is hard to do.
- Avoid smoking, chewing tobacco, and vaping.
 - Ask your care team for help if this is hard to do.
- Some medicines (doxycycline, minocycline, Fosamax) cause heartburn.
 - Try taking the medications with food.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) medications. They may help. You can buy them at your local drugstore. Take them as directed on the package.

- Try the following medicines one at a time, and pay attention to which one helps you get relief.
 - Take an antacid, like Mylanta, Maalox, Tums, or Rolaids. These medications help to neutralize the acid in your stomach.
 - Take an H2 blocker like Tagamet, Pepcid, or Zantac 360.
 - Take a proton pump inhibitor like Prilosec, Prevacid, or Nexium. These medications help to block the production of acid in your stomach.
- Generic versions of these medications work just as well as the brand-name versions.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team if you need prescription medications or a stronger dose of an OTC medication.



When to call your care team for help

- If you continue to have heartburn, even after trying all the above recommendations
- If you have severe belly area pain
- If you have problems eating and/or swallowing
- If you have both heartburn and vomiting
- If you cough up or throw up any blood
- If you have chest pain or shortness of breath



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/heartburn or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Heart Palpitations



Things you can do on your own

- Stay calm.
- Take your pulse (the beating in your wrist), or ask someone with you to take it for you. Write down how many times you feel your pulse in one minute.
- Write down how often you feel the palpitations, and how you feel when they happen. Share this information with your care team.
- Tap out the beat of your palpitations. This will help you explain the problem to your care team.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol.
- Avoid nicotine (including smoking, chewing tobacco, and vaping).
- Stay hydrated by drinking 6-8 cups of water daily.
- Try to get 8 hours of sleep a night.
- Try actions to help slow your heart rate. These are called vagal maneuvers.
 - Splash cold water on your face or the back of your neck. You can also apply an icepack to your face for 20-30 seconds.
 - Hold your breath for 15 seconds or bear down like you're having a bowel movement.
 - Try meditation exercises to reduce stress.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about beta-blockers to slow your heart rate and lower your blood pressure if you have heart palpitations that do not go away.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have any chest pain
- If your heart rate becomes very fast (more than 120 beats a minute) while you are resting
- If your heart rate feels irregular, or if it feels your heart is skipping beats
- If your palpitations are happening more often
- If your palpitations get worse
- If you have palpitations and feel short of breath
- If you feel like you may pass out



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/sideeffects or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Insomnia (Difficulty Sleeping)



Things you can do on your own

- Avoid caffeine and alcohol for at least 6 hours before bedtime.
- Drink warm milk or decaffeinated tea at bedtime.
- Take a warm bath to help you relax.
- Try to avoid napping during the day.
- Try meditation, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, or massage.
- Try biofeedback, hypnosis, and thought stopping.
- Try deep breathing.
- Stay away from screens (phone, tablet, and TV) before bedtime. Avoid screens in bed.
- Establish a bedtime routine, and try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day.
- Exercise during the day, but not within 3 hours of bedtime.
 - Try to be active for at least 15-30 minutes every day. Walking is a good option. If 30 minutes of exercise is too hard, break it up into shorter sessions. For example, try three, 10-minute sessions.
- Try cognitive behavioral therapy with a certified therapist.
- Try to continue with your normal activities.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter medications to help with insomnia. You can buy them at your local drugstore. Take them as directed on the package.

- If your insomnia is related to mild to moderate pain, taking pain medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) may help.
- Benadryl is an antihistamine that is available in pill or liquid form. It may help make you feel sleepy.
- Melatonin can help some people sleep.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications to help with sleep.

- If your insomnia is related to severe pain, taking prescription pain medication may help.
- If your insomnia is related to depression or anxiety, taking an antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication may help.
- Talk to your care team about what is causing your insomnia.



When to call your care team for help

- If you are confused during the night



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/insomnia or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Itching



Things you can do on your own

- Apply anti-itching lotion (such as Calamine or Sarna) 2-3 times per day.
- Add baking soda or oatmeal to your bathwater.
- Use gentle soap. Avoid harsh chemicals, perfumes, and detergents.
- Avoid getting sweaty, and rinse off if you are sweaty.
- Keep your nails clean and short to avoid injury when scratching.
- Try applying cool, moist cloths instead of scratching.
- Eat a healthy diet and stay hydrated by drinking 6-8 glasses of water each day.
- Use an air humidifier to keep the air in your home moist.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) medications. OTC antihistamines, like Benadryl, can help.

- Benadryl often relieves itching and can be taken every 4-6 hours. It can make you sleepy.
- You can buy Benadryl at your local drugstore.
- Benadryl comes as a pill, liquid, spray, or gel.
- Apply moisturizing or anti-itch lotion to your skin.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about a prescription topical steroid to help with itching.



When to call your care team for help

- If your skin or eyes appear yellow in color
- If your pee is brown like tea
- If you have signs of an infection such as redness along your incision, drainage of pus, or a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- If the itching may be due to a new medication



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/itching or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Mouth or Throat Sores



Things you can do on your own

- Use a toothbrush with extra soft bristles and toothpastes for sensitive gums (such as Sensodyne).
- Use a mouth swab to clean your teeth and gums.
- Avoid harsh mouthwashes that contain alcohol.
- Avoid harsh toothpastes that contain sodium lauryl sulfate (SLS).
- Rinse your mouth with saltwater or baking soda water 4 times a day for at least 30 seconds each time. (Dissolve 1 teaspoon of salt or baking soda in a cup of warm water.)
- Use lip balm to keep your lips moist.
- Eat foods that are cold, moist, bland, and soft.
- Avoid foods that are salty, spicy, hard, or crunchy.
- Drink liquids through a straw.
- Suck on zinc lozenges.



With over-the-counter medications

Ask your care team if you can take over-the-counter (OTC) medications for mouth sores.

- Try Anbesol or Orajel on your mouth sores for pain relief.
- Coat your mouth in Maalox to help your mouth sores heal.
- Take pain medications such as acetaminophen (Tylenol).



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications, such as mouthwash solutions, that contain lidocaine.



When to call your care team for help

- If you have signs of an infection, such as white patches or a fever of 100.4°F(38°C) or higher
- If your mouth pain is so severe, you are unable to eat or drink for more than 12 hours
- If you feel dizzy or feel like you will pass out when you stand



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/mouth-throat-sores or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Swelling



Things you can do on your own

- If your feet are swollen, prop them up with a pillow so they are above your heart while you are lying down.
- Change positions often, and move your arms and legs.
- Avoid sitting for long periods of time.
- Get a gentle skin massage.
- Do light exercise, such as walking.
 - If 30 minutes of exercise is too hard, break it up into shorter sessions like three, 10-minute sessions.
- Wear compression socks or sleeves if your care team suggests them.
- Keep your skin clean and moisturized.
- Ask your care team about physical therapy with a certified therapist.
- Eat low sodium foods, and avoid using extra salt.
 - Read the sodium labels in your food and try to limit your sodium to 2 grams (or 2000 mg) per day.



When to call your care team for help

- If only one arm or leg becomes newly swollen or more swollen than it was before, call your care team right away. This could be a sign of a blood clot.
- If your arm or leg swelling is painful
- If your belly becomes swollen and hard
- If you are having trouble breathing along with arm or leg swelling
- If you have signs of infection
 - If your swollen areas are red and hot
 - If you have a high fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/swelling or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Trouble Urinating



Things you can do on your own

- Drink at least 6-8 cups of fluids, such as water, each day.
- Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy foods, and tobacco products.
- Wear loose fitting clothing and cotton underwear to prevent urinary tract infections (UTIs).
- Wear absorbent pads inside your underwear.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications. They may prescribe you medicine to help relax the bladder muscles like:

- Botulinum toxin type A (Botox, Dysport) injections
- Tamsulosin (Flomax)
- Oxybutynin (Ditropan XL)



When to call your care team for help

- If you have blood in your pee
- If you have cloudy pee or pee with a foul odor
- If you feel like you need to pee after you go
- If you have pain or burning when you pee
- If you feel that you need to pee urgently or often
- If you have pain in your back or belly area
- If you have a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- If you have chills and fatigue
- If you have a history of regular UTIs or yeast infections



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/trouble-urinating or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

Tips for Managing Wheezing



Things you can do on your own

- Stay calm.
- Prop yourself up with pillows, and don't lie flat or slouch.
- Rest as often as you need to.
- Try relaxation methods or meditation.



With the help of your care team

Ask your care team about prescription medications for wheezing. Your care team may prescribe the following to help:

- Oxygen
- Inhalers
- Nebulizers



When to call your care team for help

- If the wheezing is a new symptom for you, or your inhalers aren't helping
- If you are experiencing shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- If your skin, mouth, or nails look blue or pale
- If you have chest pain
- If your wheezing does not get better after trying some of the tips listed here



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/sideeffects or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.