



TREE *of* HEALTH  
INTEGRATIVE MEDICINE

# Fighting Fatigue After Cancer

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# What This Talk is About

- ▶ Understanding fatigue
- ▶ Looking for causes: importance of proper diagnosis
- ▶ Mind-body medicine: relaxation techniques, meditation, deep breathing, yoga
- ▶ Nutrition and exercise/activity therapy
- ▶ Targeted treatment: botanical medicine, supplements/nutrients

# Fatigue



## Why Am I So Tired??

- ▶ Cancer-related fatigue: one of the most common complaints. Unrelieved by rest of sleep.
- ▶ Physical and/or mental-emotional?
- ▶ Cancer process and/or treatments?

# Why Am I so Tired

- ▶ Inflammation
- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Stress/depression/anxiety/grief
- ▶ Pain
- ▶ Treatments/medications
- ▶ Underlying physical processes (thyroid, adrenal, anemia, digestion/absorption, allergies, infections)



# Approach to Treatment

- ▶ Comprehensive evaluation visit to start - defining/setting goals. \*Health Care Team\*
- ▶ Assessments - questions, physical exams, labs
- ▶ Modalities used: therapeutic diet, exercise, botanical medicines, dietary supplements, support with prescriptions, acupuncture, physical medicine, hydrotherapy
- ▶ Treatment suggestions/plan implementation

# Taking Care of Self



# Tools

- ▶ Keep things simple - conserve energy
- ▶ Delegate and ask for help
- ▶ Schedule 20-30 min breaks
- ▶ Stay hydrated and eat well. Meal prep services?
- ▶ Do you really need to do ... ? What is really important for you to accomplish?
- ▶ Support - friends, family, counseling, groups, hobbies\*, your healthcare team - restore energy



# Sleep

- ▶ How much is enough?
- ▶ What is a good sleep?
- ▶ Sleep hygiene
- ▶ R/o sleep apnea, restless legs, + other causes for sleep troubles.
- ▶ Light therapy
- ▶ Medications/supplementation

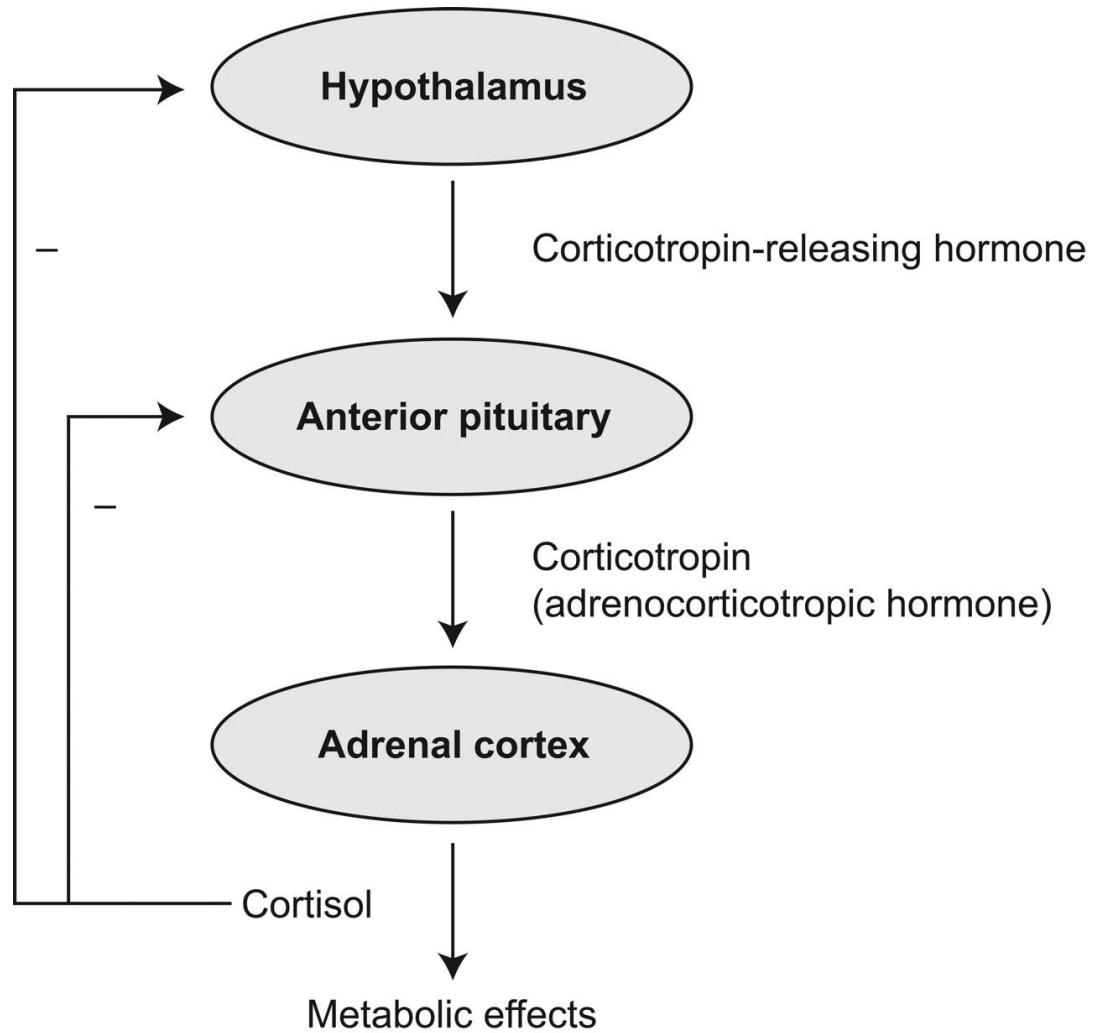
# Sleep Hygiene and Stimulus Control

- ▶ Go to bed when sleepy and get up if can't sleep after 20 minutes
- ▶ Make sure your bedroom is dark (affects melatonin), quiet, and cool
- ▶ Don't take naps during the day
- ▶ Go to bed and wake up at the same time
- ▶ No TV or any electronics before bedtime (blue light affects melatonin production and the information affects your stress hormones)
- ▶ Avoid caffeine, alcohol, spicy heavy meals, and nicotine in the second part of the day. Add higher protein snacks 2 hours prior to bed.
- ▶ Sleep rituals: bath, essential oils, music. Make you surroundings pleasant and calm
- ▶ Exercise earlier during the day

# Underlying Causes: Stress and Lifestyle

- ▶ Emotional stress plays a major role in cancer-related insomnia and fatigue
- ▶ Hormonally, some stress response is managed by HPA axis that is responsible for cortisol (stress hormone) regulation. HPA axis dysfunctions are common in patients with cancer.
- ▶ This is important information because we can measure and influence cortisol production in our bodies

# HPA Axis



Julie L. Ryan et al. *The Oncologist* 2007;12:22-34

# Hans Selye - General Adaptation Syndrome

- ▶ 3 stages of stress response
  - ▶ Alarm: Fight or flight response to stressor - release of cortisol/adrenaline, mobilizing body's resources
  - ▶ Resistance: Parasympathetic system tries to balance. Blood hormones still high (sugar, cortisol/adrenaline), elevated heart rate, breathing, blood pressure
  - ▶ Exhaustion: Reserves run out. More susceptible to disease.



# Relaxation techniques and stress reduction

- ▶ Stress reduction: What non-essential stuff you can let go of in your life for now? Clear your plate
- ▶ Counseling/cognitive therapies: support system, “debriefing”
- ▶ Relaxation techniques
  - ▶ Deep breathing
  - ▶ Meditation/Guided visualization
  - ▶ Acupuncture, massage
  - ▶ Yoga, Tai Chi, Qi Gong
  - ▶ Use gadgets to your advantage

# Meditation: Benefits

- Reduces depression, anxiety and pain
- Improves concentration and attention
- Preserves your brain
- Lowers stress
- Can help with addictions
- Improves sense of well-being



# Taking a Pause

- ▶ Meditation is the training of your mind, the art of just being, the ability to turn away from distracting thoughts and focus on the present moment.
- ▶ Which one is for you: Guided meditation, moving meditation, practicing mindfulness
- ▶ Applications: Breathe, Calm, Insight Timer, Headspace, etc.

# Breathing Exercise

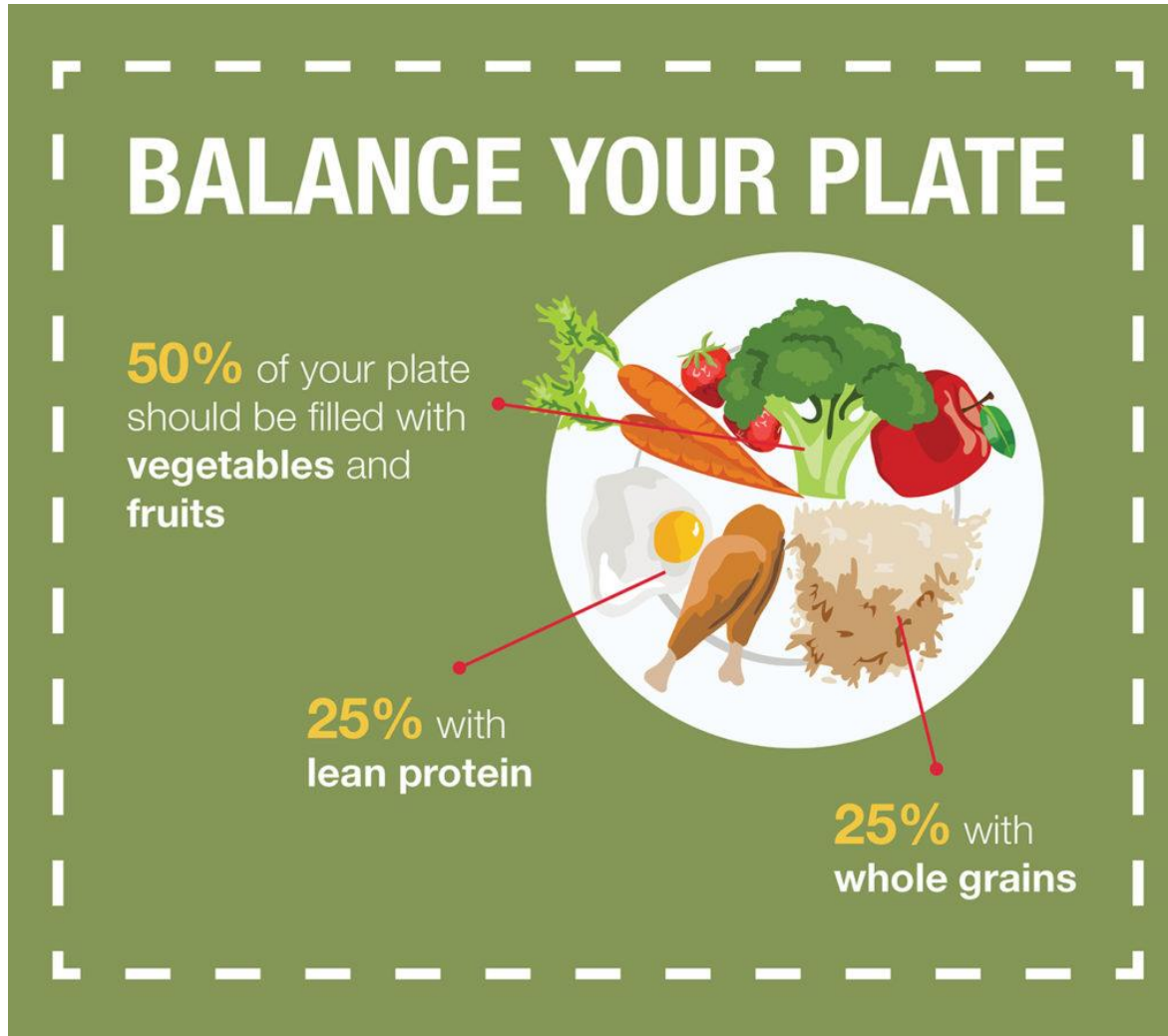
- ▶ Everyone has 10 minutes. Life will continue and you will be back to your “wheel” when you choose in no time.
- ▶ Breathing exercise 10 minutes once or twice a day
  1. Inhale - belly sticks out
  2. Exhale - belly goes in
- ▶ Easy? Maybe. The trick is you can't think of anything but your breath... But “getting out of your head” even for 10 minutes? Priceless...

# Lifestyle: Nutrition

- ▶ What is good nutrition? Are you getting enough? Are you eating regularly? Is your digestion doing well?
- ▶ Anti-inflammatory vs pro-inflammatory foods
- ▶ Eat whole foods
- ▶ Pay attention to macronutrients: carbohydrates, protein\*, fat
- ▶ Avoid your food allergens: elimination diet vs testing
- ▶ Pick the right carbs. Avoid too much sugar. Not all carbs are created equal: simple vs complex.
- ▶ Healthy sources of protein and good fats
- ▶ **\*\*Water\*\***



# What should be on your plate?



# Nutrition: Good Fats

## Omega-3 vs Omega-6

- ▶ Dietary strategy: getting a good ratio for anti-inflammatory effects
- ▶ Decrease animal products and corn, safflower, and sunflower oil (omega-6)
- ▶ Increase fish, avocado, walnuts, and olive and flax-seed oils (omega-3)

# Exercise - Energy Booster

- ▶ E.g. 20-30 min walking, 4-5 days a week
- ▶ Exercise is consistently associated with lower risk of cancer diagnosis and less recurrences.
- ▶ Regular physical activity is reported to decrease markers of inflammation, increase cytotoxic immunity, balance hormones, prevent and reverse insulin resistance, improve heart health, maintain healthy weight, improve digestion, decrease stress, and improve mood.

# How to Get More Exercise

1. Find something you love and have fun with it. Hiking, dancing, yoga, swimming, diving?
2. Start gradually, set realistic goals and keep progress.
3. Incorporate movement into your daily life - walking to store, gardening?
4. Exercise buddy, trainer.
5. Make it a priority and make it part of your daily routine.

# Use of Herbs and Supplements

- ▶ Use is based upon underlying diagnosis and ongoing issues
- ▶ Address current symptoms and side effects (pain, hot flashes, anxiety). \*Discuss with your doctor d/t possible interactions.\*
- ▶ Studied for fatigue - Ginseng, L-carnitine, CoQ10
- ▶ Support HPA (cortisol) axis - Ashwaganda, Eleutherococcus, Honokiol
- ▶ Promote better sleep and relaxation - Melatonin, Valerian, Hops, Chamomile, Cannabis



# Melatonin

- ▶ Produced by our own pineal gland. Peaks in the middle of the night, low during the day. Light suppresses production of melatonin, including light from electronic devices. Blue light blocking goggles can be used.
- ▶ Melatonin also decreases estrogen production and is important in hormone-related cancers, such as breast cancer.
- ▶ Usually for sleep purposes (chronotrope), need 0.3-3 mg of melatonin before bed time. Some people benefit from timed-release melatonin.

# Honokiol

- ▶ Extract from Magnolia Bark
- ▶ Treatment of anxiety, cardiovascular system, and digestion
- ▶ Useful in cancer
- ▶ Participates in many pathways that stop cancer from growing.



# Ashwagandha

- ▶ Comes from Ayurvedic (Indian) tradition
- ▶ Useful for modulation of stress response (helpful for cortisol management)
- ▶ Calming herb, useful for treatments in anxiety and insomnia
- ▶ Anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant, and restorative herb

# Vitamin D

- ▶ Higher intake is associated with better sleep, low vitamin D associated with higher sleepiness during the day.
- ▶ Source - supplementation and sunlight (not in Seattle from November -> April)
- ▶ Low levels are associated with many cancers.
- ▶ Other benefits: Decreases autoimmune reactions, anti-inflammatory, decreases cytokines, anti-depressant, important in digestive and endocrine health



# Botanical medicine: Chamomile



- Good for insomnia and relaxation
- Other uses: anti-inflammatory, digestive help
- Flowers are used
- Tea is a good way to take Chamomile

# Botanical Medicine: Passionflower

- Relaxation and sleep
- Used as tea or tincture or encapsulated herbal supplementation
- May interact with certain prescription medications.
- Can be used in teas or as extract



# Cannabis

- ▶ Helps fall asleep, stay asleep longer, promote deeper sleep, maybe beneficial in sleep apnea
- ▶ Can have withdrawal symptoms and vivid dreams for several weeks. Some people report more anxiety with use. Need to get the right strain and dosing.
- ▶ Look for higher CBD content. Smoking is quick but inhalation risks. Can use oral consumption, tinctures. Need reputable source as some oils can be contaminated.

# Eleutherococcus

- ▶ Adaptogen and adrenal tonic
- ▶ Improves energy
- ▶ Helpful for immune system
- ▶ “Brain booster”



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eleutherococcus\\_gracilistylus\\_BotGardBln1105\\_LeavesFallFruits.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eleutherococcus_gracilistylus_BotGardBln1105_LeavesFallFruits.JPG)



# CoQ10

- ▶ Naturally made by the body. Antioxidant, protects cells, helps make energy for cells to grow and stay healthy
- ▶ Combined with L-carnitine helped with fatigue in study of patients with breast cancer. Another trial reported no benefit. Positive case reports.
- ▶ 100-200 mg daily
- ▶ Interacts with blood thinners and theophylline

# L-carnitine

- ▶ Plays role in energy production and helps prevent damage to the cells. Can be useful in cardiovascular health and exercise tolerance.
- ▶ Can help cancer related fatigue either by itself or when combined with CoQ10.
- ▶ Dose: 4-6 g. Interacts with warfarin

# American Ginseng

- ▶ Shown effective in a clinical trial: improvement of cancer-related fatigue (2000 mg daily)
- ▶ Can interact with medications, including warfarin
- ▶ Contains at least 3% ginsenosides

# Acupuncture



# Acupuncture in cancer-related fatigue

- Can help with fatigue and improve quality of life
- Promotes quality of sleep, helps decrease feeling of anxiety and depression. Promotes sense of balance and relaxation
- Helps reduce late side effects of chemo, radiation, surgical recovery, and medications
- Can help with pain management and inflammation
- Can help with nausea/vomiting, appetite, constipation and diarrhea
- Improves circulation, decreases hot flashes and menopausal symptoms and supports immune function

# Thank You and Be Well!







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