

*Struggle with Sleep?
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UPCOMING GOLD GATHERING

Sleep Health and Handling Fatigue

Thursday, July 26

4:00–5:30 p.m.

Clinics and Surgery
Center (CSC),
room 3.330

Join CSC oncology
psychologist Dr. Jeffrey
Kendall to talk about
sleep strategies and how
to cope with fatigue.

Light refreshments
will be served and
parking at the Oak Street
ramp will be validated.

GOLD website

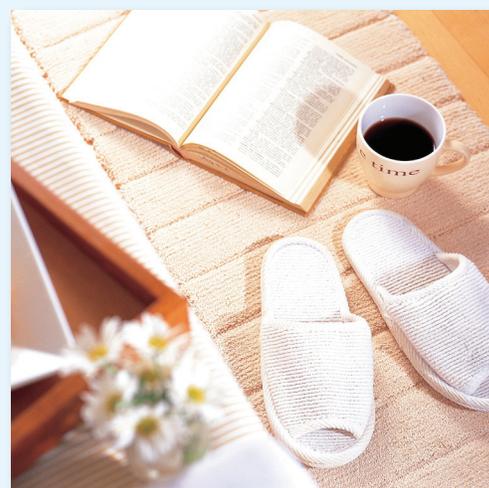
You can also visit our
website for updates and
GOLD Gathering details
at z.umn.edu/goldMN.

Tired? You Are Not Alone

As a new mom, I am very aware of the effects lack of sleep have on our bodies. For me, this means a foggy brain and lack of energy. Unfortunately, fatigue and sleep disturbances are two of the most frequent side effects of cancer and cancer treatment. In fact, almost half of the GOLD participants have reported being distressed by sleep and/or fatigue concerns.

While these are distinct issues, the symptoms are strongly related. These symptoms include being more tired than usual during or after activity, no energy, confusion, difficulty concentrating, sadness, and irritability. The difference between cancer-related fatigue and sleep disturbances is that with fatigue, the tiredness does not get better with rest or sleep.

There are a few things that can be done to help manage fatigue and



improve sleep, including resting, staying active, eating well and reducing stress. I encourage you to talk with your oncology team about your ongoing symptoms. We are also planning our next event to discuss sleep and fatigue. I hope you will join us!

Be well,

Rachel Vogel, Ph.D.
Principal
Investigator



Get a Better Night's Sleep

Adapted from cancercenter.com

If you've had trouble sleeping during or after cancer treatment, you're not alone. Up to half of cancer patients don't sleep well at some point, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Trouble sleeping, also referred to as "sleep disturbance," includes insomnia, restless legs syndrome (RLS) and fragmented sleep. Insomnia is the most common, with up to 80 percent of cancer patients having difficulty falling and/or staying asleep.

Why sleep matters

A good night's sleep not only feels good, it has significant benefits for cancer patients. Dr. Laurence Altshuler, a physician at a Tulsa Sleep Lab says "patients need as much vitality and energy as possible to fight their cancer. Sleep allows the body to relax and recoup."

"Without sleep, the body becomes even more stressed, which can interfere with its ability to fight cancer," Dr. Altshuler says. "In fact, lack of sleep can depress the immune system."

Researchers are studying how your sleep quality might influence how well your body fights cancer. Trouble sleeping, especially when it's chronic, alters the balance of cortisol and melatonin. These two hormones may influence the behavior of cancer cells.

Why cancer patients can have sleep problems

Emotional distress is usually the main reason cancer patients don't sleep well. Veronica Stevens, Naturopathic Oncology Provider at CTCA in Philadelphia, says emotional distress disrupts sleep for about 70 percent of the cancer patients she treats.



Emotional distress includes worry, anxiety, depression, and overall stress caused related to family issues and financial concerns.

The side effects of the cancer itself or treatment, including certain medications, also may contribute to sleep problems.

Diagnosing sleep disorders

Clinicians diagnose some sleep disorders, such as insomnia, by asking specific questions to obtain a patient history. Others, such as sleep apnea and narcolepsy, require a formal sleep study. Sleep studies measure the quality of your sleep and your body's response to sleep problems.

Sleep typically begins with NREM sleep, then transitions to a short period of REM sleep before switching back to NREM sleep. This cycle occurs four-five times per night.

NREM sleep consists of four stages, with stages 3 and 4 being deep sleep. The body strengthens the immune system during deep sleep, when it also repairs and regenerates tissues, while building bones and muscle.

Therapies to sleep better

If you have chronic sleep problems, a good night's sleep can seem out of reach. There are several techniques, though, to help improve your sleep. In many cases, cancer patients can benefit from working with a psychologist or sleep specialist. It's

best to consult your clinician before starting any specific therapy.

Light and stimulant therapy: Using special lamps, specifically dosed and timed light exposure helps regulate circadian rhythms and establish a regular sleep-wake cycle.

Cognitive behavioral

therapy: Research shows that cognitive behavioral therapy has helped 70-80 percent of all patients, not just cancer patients, and reduces by half the need for cancer patients to take sleep medications. Some methods include:

- **Relaxation techniques**, such as deep breathing, guided imagery and progressive muscle relaxation
- **Stimulus control**, which involves limiting time awake in bed and viewing the bed as a place for sleep
- **Sleep hygiene**, such as avoiding heavy meals and television before bed and going to bed at the same time every night
- **Mindfulness-based stress reduction:** This therapy focuses on reducing stress and improving psychological well-being.
- **Sleep restriction procedures:** Setting a strict bedtime and wake-up time reduces sleep to a fixed window of time. This therapy may create daytime sleepiness at first, which helps reset the body's internal clock.

For more info, visit <https://www.cancercenter.com/search/?q=sleep>