

# CANCERFOCUS



## 1 Cancer-related Fatigue



## 4 Guide to Skin Cancers



## 6 Leaving on Your Own Terms



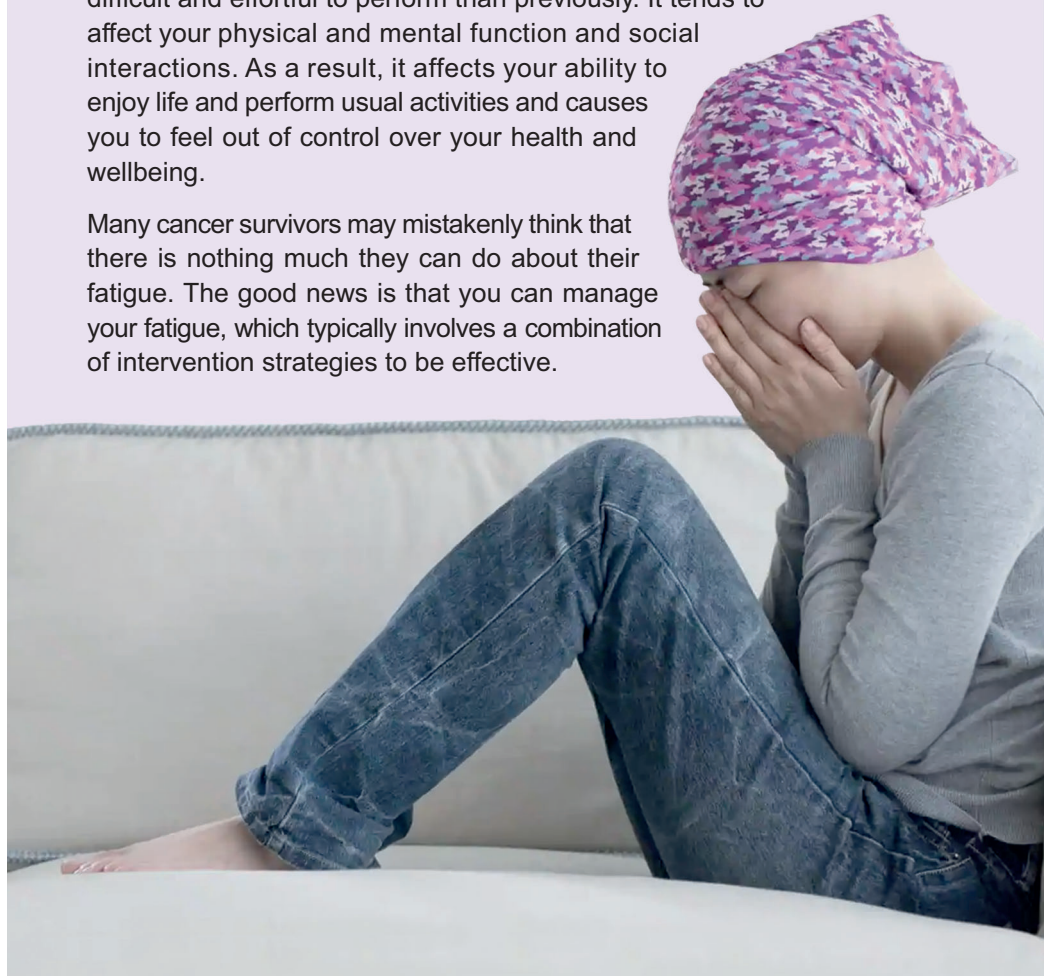
## 8 Never Losing Hope

# CANCER-RELATED FATIGUE

*Part of the Cancer Rehabilitation Programme by Singapore Cancer Society*

**C**ancer-related fatigue is the most common symptom affecting people with cancer. You may experience fatigue before, during or after your cancer treatment. It is a feeling of constant tiredness despite sufficient rest and sleep, and usual daily activities become more difficult and effortful to perform than previously. It tends to affect your physical and mental function and social interactions. As a result, it affects your ability to enjoy life and perform usual activities and causes you to feel out of control over your health and wellbeing.

Many cancer survivors may mistakenly think that there is nothing much they can do about their fatigue. The good news is that you can manage your fatigue, which typically involves a combination of intervention strategies to be effective.



Cancer-related fatigue can be caused by cancer and/or its treatment side effects, though the cause is not fully understood. These causes may include:

- Existing fatigue before treatment
- The cancer itself
- Cancer treatments (chemotherapy, radiotherapy or drugs)
- Anemia (low red blood count)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Medications
- Pain/Emotional distress
- Depression and/or anxiety
- Lack of exercise
- Sleep problems
- Nutrition problems
- Other medical conditions, e.g. infection, thyroid dysfunction

Cancer-related fatigue may cause distress and affect your mood. For example you may feel irritable or depressed. It is usually more severe than the usual fatigue you may have experienced before you had cancer.



Visit Singapore Cancer Society Rehabilitation Centre for a more customised prescription. For more information call **1800-727-3333**.

### 1 Talk to others

Everyone, no matter how emotionally strong they are, can benefit from more support. Depending on your preference, you may choose to confide in only a few people you know well.



### 2 Make your activities easier

Consider eliminating unnecessary steps of a task and reduce physical effort, such as sitting on a chair to shower.



### 3 Reserve the remaining 25% of your energy

The 75% rule is about always keeping 25% of your energy in reserve. You know that no matter how well you plan things there can always be the unexpected demand on your energy. Delegating some of the more physically or mentally draining tasks to your family members or friends may be helpful. On your part, accept help offered by others.



### 4 Know your 4Ps

- Planning your day
- Prioritising your activities
- Pacing yourself during activities
- Positioning yourself well when doing activities



### 10 Having a good night's sleep

Not getting the right amount of sleep will certainly affect your energy. It is important to develop and practice healthy sleep habits to improve your ability to fall asleep and remain asleep through the night. A sleep diary may be useful to track the quality of your sleep.



### 9 Mindfulness

Mindfulness involves taking the time to pay attention to where we are and what is going on without judgements, and that starts with us becoming more aware of our body, thoughts, and emotions.



### 8 Rest and relaxation

Rest and relaxation can be used in a restorative way once we are tired, or in a preventative way to prevent the fatigue we experience from worsening.



### 7 Healthy diet

It is important to have adequate and appropriate nutrients throughout the day as it improves your energy and reduces your fatigue. Your dietitian will be able to provide you with more information tailored to your needs.



### 6 Be active

Engaging in regular exercises has been shown to be effective in improving fatigue. Some benefits may include improving endurance and strength, promoting better sleep, appetite and well-being. Your Exercise Physiologist or Physiotherapist will supervise and advise you on how to perform your exercises safely by progressively increasing the intensity and duration of your exercise.



### 5 Know your body

Recognise your baseline and avoid pushing beyond your limit. Your baseline is a comfortable level of activity that you can manage without experiencing a significant increase in your fatigue. Knowing your body will help you plan and complete tasks with more ease.



## How to manage cancer-related fatigue

Be patient with yourself as making changes to your daily routine take time.  
Set small and realistic goals.

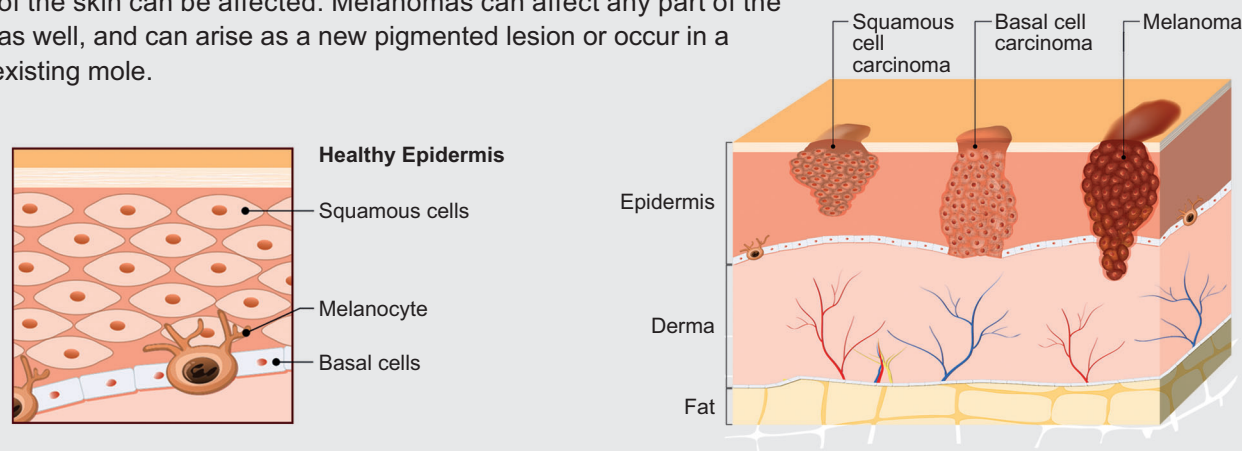




# A GUIDE TO SKIN CANCERS

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Dermatologist  
Thomson Specialist Skin Centre

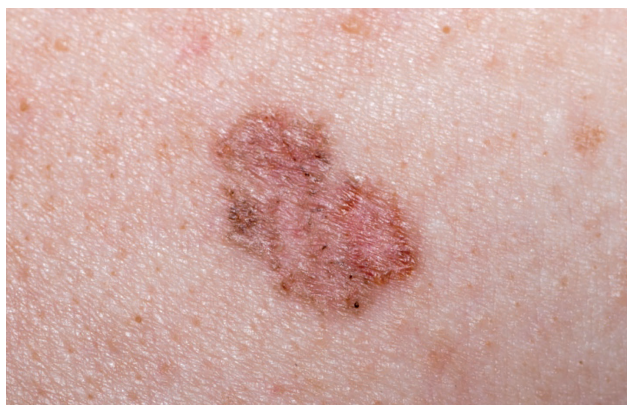
There are three main types of skin cancers that dermatologists see: basal cell carcinomas (BCC), squamous cell carcinomas (SCC) and melanomas. The first two are far more common and also classified as non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC). Many non-melanoma skin cancers occur over the head and neck region, but any part of the skin can be affected. Melanomas can affect any part of the skin as well, and can arise as a new pigmented lesion or occur in a pre-existing mole.



## Types of skin cancers

### Basal cell carcinoma

BCCs are the most common type of skin cancer. They tend to grow slowly and usually start as a painless raised shiny or pigmented skin bump, or occasionally as an ulcerated area. They can also appear like a scar-like area that is flat white, yellow or waxy in colour or a reddish irritated patch on your skin. BCCs usually do not spread to lymph nodes and thus very rarely result in death. They can, however, cause local destruction,



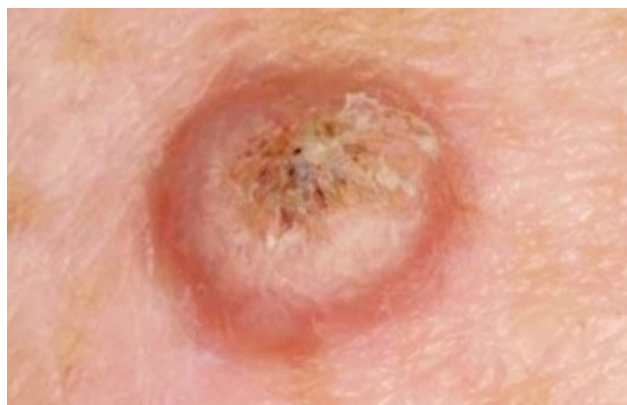
Example of a pigmented basal cell carcinoma

Kindly note: Photos just serve as a general reference for what basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinoma can look like. As not all basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinoma have the same appearance, it is recommended to get yourself checked by a dermatologist should you notice anything unusual and different on your skin.

and certain anatomical locations can be challenging to treat – such as the eyelid margins or the ears.

### Squamous cell carcinoma

SCCs are more aggressive than BCCs, and more likely to spread to lymph nodes, although the overall incidence of this is still low. The risk of lymph node involvement is higher for very large SCCs, especially for those occurring in areas such as the lips or ears. The lesion is often red and crusted and feels rather hard. It often grows much more rapidly compared to BCCs. SCCs can also arise from long-standing chronic skin wounds and severe burn scars.



Example of a squamous cell carcinoma.  
Image from Dr Con Pappas, Skin Cancer Medicine & Surgery, 2018.

## Melanoma

This is the most dangerous form of skin cancer, with the ability to spread to lymph nodes and distant organs. The common appearance is usually a pigmented, irregular lesion that can develop from a pre-existing mole or arise on its own. Asian patients, particularly the older ones, are also more at risk for developing acral melanomas affecting the fingers and feet.

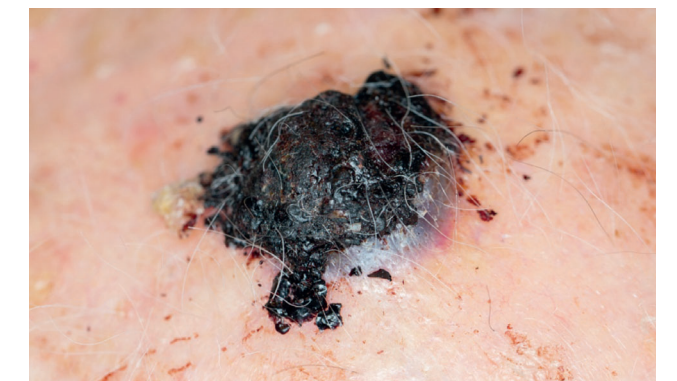
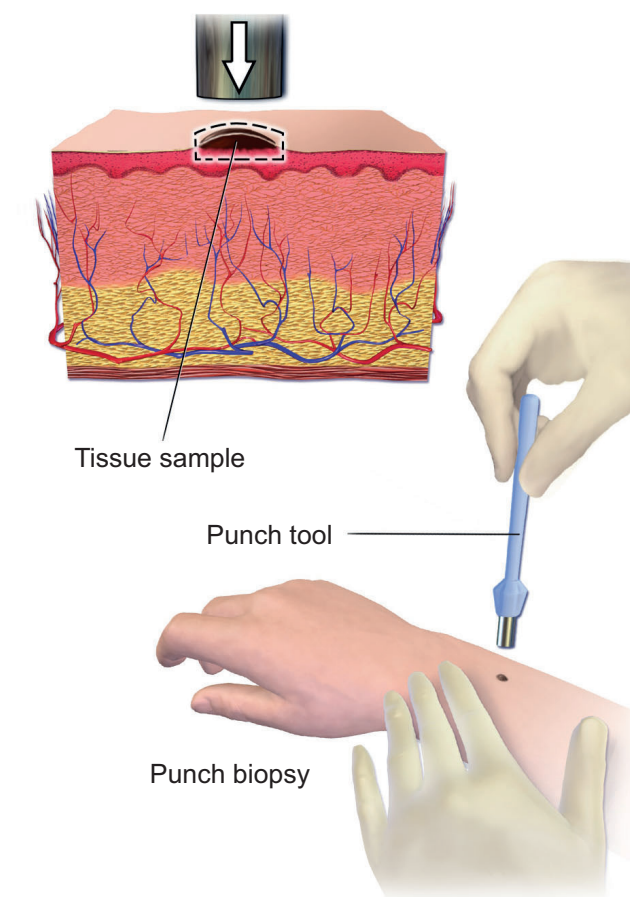
As melanoma progresses to the later stages, the diameter and depth of the lesion might increase.



Example of melanoma

## How do we diagnose it?

The diagnosis is confirmed by a skin biopsy, which is done under a local anaesthetic.



Example of malignant melanoma

Kindly note: Photos just serve as a general reference for what melanomas can look like. As not all melanomas have the same appearance. It is recommended to get yourself checked by a dermatologist should you notice anything unusual and different on your skin.

its lymphatic drainage, and the first lymph node that it drains to is sampled to detect any possible involvement by the cancer cells. The prognosis of melanomas is correlated with their depth. Depending on the stage of the melanoma, chemotherapy or targeted therapy may be required, under the care of an oncologist.

## How do I know if I have skin cancer?

Visit a dermatologist if you have:

- Any skin ulcer that is not healing, especially if it is painless and has been present for over a month
- Any mole that appears to be getting darker, increasing in size or becoming irregular
- A raised skin bump or red crusted growth that is increasing in size, particularly if it is on the head and neck area

As with most cancers, early detection gives you the best chance of a cure. If you have had bad sun damage in the past, it is also prudent to have your skin checked by a dermatologist. Often, areas of 'pre-cancer' can be detected and these can sometimes be treated with non-surgical methods such as freezing with liquid nitrogen or topical therapies.



# LEAVING ON YOUR OWN TERMS

Vivian Koo, Social Worker, Singapore Cancer Society  
Florina Wong, Social Worker, Singapore Cancer Society

Preserving one's dignity in satisfying a person's end-of-life care needs is often associated with describing a 'good death'. Dignity care at Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) focuses on maintaining one's dignity in three broad domains relating to illness-related concerns, psychospiritual wellbeing, and social needs. This approach is also known as the dignity model of palliative care (Chochinov, 2002). Addressing this spectrum of needs enables patients to make more informed choices, have better symptom management and offer opportunities for working on personal dignity-preserving matters for a good closure.

SCS adopts the dignity model approach in helping terminally ill patients to receive care beyond symptom control. These are stories of how SCS supports their patients and families to maintain their sense of dignity in a variety of ways.

Seventy-year-old Mr Zainal was diagnosed with terminal cancer a month before his 90-year-old mother was diagnosed with cancer. They were both referred to SCS Hospice Care Services. Mr Zainal's mother had a wish to maintain her sense of autonomy and preferred to pass away at home with her son and grandchildren by her side. Mr Zainal wanted to continue his role as a son to his dying mother and requested for symptom control. Mr Zainal also wished to pass on at home.

SCS Hospice Care Services provided three months of intensive care and support for both patients and their family to achieve two 'good goodbyes' for the family. For some, leaving a legacy for the living is important in preserving personal dignity. This may come in the form of a family photo album, video, personal memoir, letter, or journal.



Leaving a legacy for the living is important in preserving personal dignity. This may come in the form of a family photo album, video, personal memoir, letter, or journal.

In this pandemic situation, being separated from their loved ones overseas can exacerbate the sense of grief and loss for patients. The SCS team recognises the patients' longing to be reunited with loved ones and leveraged on technology to enable them to connect with their loved ones. Saying their final goodbyes is essential for both patients and their family to achieve a good closure.

To enhance the patient's sense of dignity, SCS also checks for any final wishes the team can help to fulfil.

SCS Living Well Fund supports end-of-life patients who have financial challenges. SCS also partners with Ambulance Wish Singapore, an independent charity organisation that helps to actualise final requests from terminally ill patients. SCS' patients have also expressed a sense of contentment and closure. In conclusion, the dignity model is how we can make our end-of-life patients feel valued, thereby bolstering patients' dignity in dying to bid their loved ones a good goodbye.

## SCS HOSPICE CARE SERVICES

In the advanced stages of cancer, patients may choose to receive care and support in their homes to maximise their quality of life for as long as possible. Patients may choose to do so to spend their days with their loved ones in the comfort of their own homes.

Once a cancer patient has been referred to and accepted under our care, a primary nurse will be assigned to manage treatment. The primary nurse will contact the patient and his/her caregiver to arrange for an initial clinical assessment in the patient's residence as soon as possible to ensure that continued care is provided to the patient after being diagnosed and/or discharged.

The initial assessment will evaluate:

- the clinical condition of the patient
- the emotional state of patient and caregiver
- the patient's rehabilitation needs



Following the initial assessment, the clinical team will advise on the necessary intervention(s) to manage the patient's symptoms and make regular visits to check in on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of patients and their families.

Where necessary, the clinical team will make referrals for therapists to visit patients and assess their condition in their residences, who will then recommend activities and exercises to help patients maintain their function and strength in their daily lives. Hospice home care also includes home modification and caregiver training.

To apply for SCS Hospice Care Services call 1800-727-3333.





Established in 1964, Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), a voluntary welfare organisation has positively impacted the lives of those affected by cancer.

It actively promotes cancer awareness in the community and offers cancer screening services [Mammogram, Pap test, Faecal Immunochemical Test (FIT)], welfare assistance, community based cancer rehabilitation, cancer support group activities and hospice care to support cancer patients and families.

## OUR VISION

To be Singapore's leading charity in the fight for a cancer-free community.

## OUR MISSION

To Minimise Cancer and Maximise Lives through effective programmes.

## OUR PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

### 1. Financial Assistance

- Cancer Treatment Fund (Cancer treatment subsidies for cancer patients)
- Cancer Care Fund
- Welfare Aid for needy cancer patients

### 2. Free Cancer Screening

- Pap test and HPV test (For Cervical cancer)
- Health Education: Breast Self-Examination
- Mammogram screening (For Breast cancer; CHAS Card Holders)
- Faecal Immunochemical Test [FIT] (For Colorectal cancer)

### 3. Public Education

- Cancer awareness campaigns
- Cancer-related talks and forums
- Cancer information (via website & telephone service)

### 4. Cancer Support

- Cancer support groups and activities
- Psycho-social services

### 5. Cancer Rehabilitation

- Integrated, person-centred holistic approach with aim to return to normalcy

### 6. Hospice Care Services

- Medical and psycho-social care for terminally ill cancer patients

### 7. Cancer Research

- Cancer research grants and awards

### 8. Volunteers Programme

- Volunteering opportunities to suit people with different interests and skills

## CONTACT US

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# NEVER LOSING HOPE



Jeannie was experiencing very bad sinus and went to a General Practitioner's clinic. The Doctor prescribed normal medication and sent her back home. Weeks went by, and she saw no improvement in her condition. She realised something was amiss and she went to a Polyclinic. She was then referred to an Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist.

In February 2019, Jeannie was diagnosed with stage 3 nasopharyngeal cancer. She had to go through grueling weeks of radiation and chemotherapy. She was not able to speak clearly and swallow properly, as the treatment caused her throat to become dry. Jeannie was also struggling to manage work during her treatment.

Being a nurse, Jeannie was familiar with hospital environments. "You see things differently when you are on the receiving end. I became a patient going through treatment. Reality is very much different, no matter how much you think you are ready for it," she said.

She braved that phase of her life and overcame all challenges. She went through scans to ensure that the cancer is controlled. But Jeannie faced another adversity in her life. Just when her treatment came to an end, she found herself without a job.

"It was very hard to manage at that point. I had to look after myself and needed to recuperate," she added. It was at that time her oncologist referred her to Singapore Cancer Society Rehabilitation Centre.

Jeannie started her rehabilitation journey in late 2019. The cancer treatment side-effects also affected her body functions that help in preventing falls. She experienced muscle weakness, difficulty in balance and walking. She remembered that there were even times where she would fall walking down the road. She underwent several rehabilitation services including Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietetics and exercise programmes to manage side effects caused by post cancer treatment.

Knowing Jeannie has stopped working and was running into financial challenges, a Social Worker in Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) followed up closely with Jeannie to facilitate her application with SCS Financial Assistance.

"I am very grateful to SCS. The SCS team ensured that seamless care was rendered to me while I can continued by rehabilitation," highlighted Jeannie.

"Do you know I was a donor for SCS before? Never did I ever think that I will on the receiving end and be supported by the Society. I don't think I would have gotten the strength to survive if not for SCS. Now all I hope is to go back to having a job," said the 55 year old cancer survivor, who is proudly living independently.

SCS provides cancer patients with avenues for assistance at every stage of treatment. To find out more click <https://bit.ly/2IMxkiy> or email [welfare@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:welfare@singaporecancersociety.org.sg).

Scan the QR code using bank app  
to donate to Singapore Cancer Society.  
All proceeds will be channelled to  
support programmes and services  
conducted by Singapore Cancer Society.



Singapore Cancer Society produces a monthly e-newsletter 'Society News' with updates on SCS happenings, campaigns, events, beneficiaries and fund-raising initiatives. To subscribe: [enquiry@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:enquiry@singaporecancersociety.org.sg)