

Acute Services Division



Information for patients

Energy Conservation



Occupational Therapy Services
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde

What is Energy Conservation?

Energy conservation is all about planning your daily activities and finding easier ways of doing them.

Why is it important?

Achieving a healthy balance between activity and rest is central to managing your lifestyle in order to help fatigue (tiredness) and, for people with respiratory issues to reduce breathlessness.

It is important to feel in control of your physical and emotional symptoms, and by changing your daily routines, this can be achieved.

Conserving Energy

When adapting to energy conservation techniques, it is helpful to remember the 4 P's:

Plan

Prioritise

Pace

Posture

Planning is a very individual process. It involves taking time to consider what needs to be done on particular days and avoiding too many 'energy demanding' activities in one day or week.

- List daily activities and remove the non-essential tasks (or ask others to help)
- Prepare for the task by gathering all items needed
- Spread heavy and light duties throughout the day

Prioritising your activities is equally important:

- Do the most important jobs first.
- Leave unessential tasks for another day.
- Rest when you feel tired or breathless.

Pacing requires a degree of self discipline as (you may feel the need to) to keep going to get the job done.

- Balance activities by taking regular, short rest breaks during and, or between tasks (have 5 -10 minutes rest per hour of activity)
- Do tasks slowly to help stop fatigue and, or breathlessness from building up – a moderate steady pace is more productive,
- Give yourself plenty of time to avoid rushing

Use good **Posture**:

- Sit or stand straight as a stooped posture makes breathing more difficult. Support yourself on a surface when working in one place (e.g. standing at a worktop making a cup of tea)

- Organise work areas so that regularly used items are within easy reach to avoid reaching, bending, twisting etc.
- Take advantage of lightweight equipment and labour saving devices e.g. long handled grab-stick, travel kettle, electric tin opener.
- Use good body mechanics
 - ✓ push or pull an item, rather than lift it
 - ✓ slide items along the counter
 - ✓ stand close to the object you are moving
 - ✓ carry items close to the body, keeping your back straight
 - ✓ If lifting is unavoidable, then use the power from your leg muscles as opposed to your back.

Here are some useful examples for you to put into practice:



Self Care Activities

Bathing or Showering:

- Consider taking a bath or shower in the evening and allow plenty of time. Do not have the water too hot.
- Gather all necessary items beforehand and keep in 'easy reach'.
- Reduce steam by turning on cold water first, then slowly add hot water.
- Use a shower chair or bath board if possible.
- Sit whilst drying - terry towelling robes are a good alternative.
- Use long handled equipment to avoid bending.

Dressing:

- Gather all clothing items beforehand and keep in easy reach.
- Remember breathing techniques – inhale when reaching and exhale when bending.
- Sit to dress and dress lower body first.
- Minimise bending by lifting leg up or use a step stool, to don socks, shoes, trousers etc.
- Or use long handled equipment to dress lower body, such as long handled shoe horn, grab stick etc.
- Pull up lower body garments together.
- Wear slip on shoes or use elastic shoe laces.

Grooming:

- Sit when possible.
- Supporting elbows on counter can be helpful.
- Do not hold breath when shaving or washing.
- Use an electric toothbrush.

Home Management Activities

Meal Preparation

- Gather all necessary items beforehand.
- Sit to prepare the food and to wash up.
- Prepare some of the meal ahead of time.
- Buy ready prepared or frozen veg and or ready made (microwave) meals.
- Rest after preparing meals to avoid being too exhausted to eat the food.
- Slide items around the worktop to avoid lifting.
- Allow dishes to air dry.

Shopping

- If possible, try and organise your shopping list to match the layout of the supermarket.
- Shop at times when the supermarket is likely to be less busy.
- Go with someone who can help you push the trolley and reach high and low items from the shelves and lift heavier items.



- Do not carry a basket.
- Ask the shop assistant to bag your groceries for you at the till.
- Ask a friend or family member to unload your shopping for you at home.
- Do more regular, small shops as opposed to one large, heavy grocery run.
- Alternatively, order your shopping on the internet and have it delivered.

Housework

- Use a long handled duster, dustpan and brush, or long handled vacuum attachments,
- Use long-handled sponge to clean bath tub or shower tray,
- Use mop to clean spills rather than bending down with a cloth,
- Use a long handled grab stick to pick item up off the floor (this can also be used for dressing, reaching items out of cupboards, washing machine etc)
- Have large items (eg bedding, curtains) sent to the laundrette if possible,
- Do your ironing sitting down,
- Organise household tasks over the whole week, doing a little each day.

**But remember where possible,
ask other to help!**

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The information collated to make this booklet, came from the following resources

www.geocities.com

www.advanceweb.com/OT

www.msrc.co.uk (Multiple Sclerosis Resource Centre)

<http://chestjournal.chestpubs.org>

