

energy

Energy conservation and task simplification look at the how, when, where and why you do your tasks and activities. The aim is to show you how you can save energy and make large tasks more manageable. By undertaking a task in the easiest possible way you will use up the least amount of energy, which allows you to have more energy for the activities you want to do and that are important to you.

Being aware of your individual level of fatigue and tiredness, and knowing the tasks that can trigger them is important in the self-management of these symptoms. If you know what your own limitations are you can work out a routine that suits you.

The following will help you with your self-management:

Planning

- Plan ahead and spread energy demanding tasks such as cleaning, shopping, and appointments throughout the week (refer to Time link)
- Balance periods of work with rest and make sure that you rest before you tire. It is better to do short bursts of activity and have short rest breaks instead of a long activity and resting in the afternoon

Prioritising

- Make a list and prioritise tasks for each day - remember urgent tasks may not be necessary
- Concentrate on essential tasks only. Questions you should be asking yourself are:
 - Is this task really necessary, does it need to be done - why?
 - Must it be done today or can it wait?
 - Is this the best time to do the task?
 - Is there someone else who could do this task for me?
 - Is this the best way to do the task? Are there any gadgets/equipment/methods that I can use to help me?

Pacing

- Task - rest - task - rest. Work at a steady pace
- Listen to your body. Rest when you need to and learn to adapt to a life lived at a slower pace
- Do not be tempted to overdo it if you are having a good spell - you might pay for it later!
- If you have an important event coming up prepare for it by getting as much rest as possible beforehand

- Pace yourself so that your tasks match your energy levels. You may find that it is better to complete energy demanding tasks early when you are most rested
- Frequent rest periods of 5-10 minutes can increase the amount of time you can continue to do tasks
- Ask others to help you with tasks that you find too difficult, or ask them to do infrequent tasks so you can save your energy for tasks that need to be completed more often
- Divide one large task into smaller, more manageable jobs
- Think about ways that might help reduce energy demands in certain tasks such as using packaged mixes/sauces or frozen foods to decrease time and energy for meal preparation

Positioning

- Be aware of your posture. Avoid prolonged standing or bending, or working with your arms outstretched and unsupported
- When possible do the task sitting down (for example ironing, dressing, and food preparation)
- Identify and gather all equipment required to complete a task before starting to avoid repeat trips. Put the equipment on a trolley to transport it
- Organise work areas and store frequently used supplies and equipment within easy reach. Store heavy and less frequently used items in lower positions. Slide objects across a counter rather than lifting them
- Electrical appliances are great energy conservers. They include automatic washing machines and clothes dryers, self-defrosting fridges, microwave ovens, electric can openers and electric food processors

Making it real - ideas to try:

- Personal Care:
 - Use warm not hot water for baths or showers. Hot water increases muscle fatigue
 - Sit on a stool in the bathroom whilst shaving or applying makeup. Prop elbows up onto the bench if you can
 - Have items that you use daily within easy reach
- Dressing:
 - Collect all clothes needed before dressing
 - While dressing sit as much as possible
- Meal preparation:
 - Plan a weekly menu
 - Consider tinned/frozen and pre-prepared foods
 - Make larger quantities when you cook and freeze the remainder
 - Collect all utensils and ingredients required before you begin to prevent repeat trips
- Housework:
 - Clean a little each day
 - Collect all cleaning items on a trolley before you begin to prevent repeat trips
 - Where possible sit rather than stand
 - To decrease the need for bending, use long-handled dustpans and self-wringing mops
- Bed Making:
 - Have the bed kept out away from the wall, or have it on castors
 - Use fitted sheets and doonas to reduce energy required in making up a bed
- Laundry:
 - Do a little washing at a time rather than all at once, or alternate colours e.g. whites, towels and sheets on every other day
 - Fold clothes as soon as you take them off of the line or out of the dryer
 - Sit to iron and only iron what you really need to
- Shopping:
 - Shop by phone/internet if possible
 - Get the shop to deliver if this service is available or use a trolley
 - Shop when you are at your peak energy
 - Plan a menu and make a list
 - Shop by yourself for only a few items. Ask a friend or partner to do major weekly shopping
 - If you arrive home tired put away only the perishables. A partner or friend can do the rest
 - Avoid peak shopping/traffic hours

The information provided assists in self-management and is intended as recommendations only. For more information please see your medical or health professional.



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