

Energy Conservation and Daily Activities

Patient Information

Cardiac Occupational Therapy Department



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What is Energy Conservation?

Energy conservation is a technique that can help you to adapt the way you complete your daily activities so that you use less energy and feel less tired and put less strain on your body. It can also help you to adapt your environment to provide the best support when carrying out day-to-day activities. Energy conservation techniques aim to improve your quality of life by helping you to conserve your energy for the activities **you want to do**, as well as those that you feel you have to do.

How can it help me?

By developing energy conservation skills you can reduce the amount of energy / effort, and therefore oxygen, which you use in order to complete everyday activities. This can result in reduced feelings of fatigue, pain and breathlessness. Therefore, when completing activities you will be more comfortable, and have increased self-confidence and independence.

Remember:

Energy is like money in the bank; to be spent wisely. Repeated over spending can put you in debt physically as well as financially.

The following examples of energy conservation techniques are a combination of ideas from clinicians and patients who have found their own ways of effectively adapting their skills and coping with activities of daily living. These tips are meant to be a guide only. You will probably have your own ways which work well for you.

General Energy Conservation Techniques

- Prioritising tasks – leaving tasks for another day when faced with too many tasks or delegating to another person if appropriate.
- Planning tasks – Having all items to hand when starting a task. Allowing enough time to complete a task or make a car journey to avoid feeling stressed.
- Pace activities – Break activities down into smaller tasks, eliminating unnecessary steps and taking regular breaks.
- Learning to say No! - knowing your own limits and not feeling guilty.

General Health and Posture

- Be as fit as possible
- Excess weight adds to stresses on your spine
- 70% of your body weight goes through your lower back
- Bend the knees and keep the back straight when lifting objects from the floor and try to keep items close to the body at waist height.
- Avoid twisting when lifting objects where possible.

Sitting

- Use a chair that is not too low
- When sitting on an easy chair or settee, use a lumbar roll and change position to prevent strain on the back
- Do not sit for prolonged periods; get up and move around

Stairs

- Breathe in through your nose when standing
- Climb a few stairs while you breathe out through pursed lips
- Stop as you breathe in through your nose again and then climb a further few steps as you breathe out
- Repeat this pattern until you reach a landing or the top of the stairs
- Have a second banister rail
- Have a chair at the top and bottom of the stairs to rest on

Showering/bathing

- If possible sit down to undress, wash, dry and re-dress
- When performing activities that mean your arms are above shoulder height, e.g. washing / combing hair or brushing teeth, inhale as you raise your arms and exhale as you carry out the activity. Rest after each exhalation
- Instead of using a towel to dry yourself, put on a towelling dressing gown and sit down until you feel dry
- Sitting at the sink or in the bathroom to complete tasks can help to conserve energy and reduce breathlessness

- Electrical gadgets can assist such as shavers or electric toothbrushes
- Use long handled aids to avoid bending down to your feet and reaching to your back
- When showering aim the water onto your shoulders / chest, rather than over your head as this can increase your shortness of breath and may make you feel anxious when water is running over your face
- By letting the water out of the bath and moving from sitting to kneeling getting out of the bath may be easier. Non-slip bathmats are also a good idea

Dressing

- Gather the clothes you intend to wear in one place near where you are to dress
- Dress your lower half first as this requires the most energy and so your upper body clothing does not restrict you
- Reduce the amount of bending you are doing by placing your foot onto a footstool or across your other leg or utilizing long handled aids

Cooking

- Plan your meals when you are not hungry or tired, then you can ensure you are equipped to prepare well-balanced meals
- As a general rule of thumb, a number of small meals are preferable to a few larger meals
- Sit down to prepare vegetables, wash dishes and when mixing ingredients
- Make use of electrical appliances such as, blenders, electric can openers, microwaves and slow cookers
- Use a cooking basket to cook vegetables rather than lifting a heavy pan
- Use a plastic jug to fill the kettle rather than lifting the kettle to the taps
- Purchase a lightweight or travel kettle

- Position items in easier to reach places to reduce bending and reaching
- Position items together, e.g. tea, coffee and sugar with the kettle and near the fridge
- Use a trolley to assist you in transporting items

Shopping

- Planning reduces stress, make a shopping list
- Try to shop at quieter times to avoid being jostled and you can shop at a leisurely pace
- Use a smaller and shallower shopping trolley to reduce bending
- Always remember to lift, bend and carry correctly
- Spread the shopping out over the week
- Ask family or friends to assist with a large, bulk shop once a month
- Get supermarkets to deliver your shopping
- Look into internet shopping, door-to-door service!
- Ask for assistance from the staff to reach up / down to items, they're there to help!

Laundry

- Use fabric conditioner to reduce creasing
- Adjust the ironing board to waist height for sitting or standing.
- Use a high stool to perch on if you are unable to sit
- Use a steam iron if possible as these need less pressure
- It is easier to sit on a small stool or kneel to load and unload the washing machine
- Keep your washing basket handy on a box or stool as this saves unnecessary bending

Housework

- Spread cleaning into small manageable amounts taking plenty of rest breaks
- After washing up let dishes drip dry
- Have two sets of cleaning products, one upstairs and one downstairs, to avoid carrying items up and down stairs
- Use a trolley to transport cleaning products round the home
- Use a helping hand (pick up stick) to aid picking things up off the floor
- Use long-handled tools such as mops and long handled dustpan and brush

When changing the bed linen consider:

- Turning the duvet cover inside out and then turning it back on itself
- Using safety pins or pegs to attach the duvet and cover together whilst changing the same
- Make one side of the bed first then move round, kneeling to tuck in sheets or consider fitted sheets
- Encourage family members to make their own beds

Gardening

- Use lightweight, long handled gadgets such as a hoe to reduce bending when weeding
- A folding stool or kneeling stool can be useful
- Use a shallow garden basket to transport your tools around
- Consider raised beds, window boxes and hanging baskets for easier to reach gardens
- Breakdown tasks into stages i.e. Imagine the garden in sections
- An electric mower is easier to manoeuvre than a manual one
- Delegate heavier tasks where possible
- Ensure you take regular rests

Local Pharmacy - Your local pharmacies offer a wide range of services including information and general advice on symptom relief medicines as well as a prescription collection and delivery service.

Comments, Compliments or Complaints

The Patient Relations/Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Department provides confidential on the spot advice, information and support to patients, relatives, friends, and carers.

Contact Us

Tel: 01942 822376 (Monday to Friday 9am until 4pm)

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Ask 3 Questions

Become more involved in decisions about your healthcare. You may be asked to make choices about your treatment. To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions:

1. What are my options?
2. What are the positives and negatives of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?



How We Use Your Information

For details on how we collect, use, and store the information we hold about you, please see patient information leaflet, Ref. **Corp 006** How we use your information, this can be found on the Patient Information Leaflets page on the Trust website, see details on the front cover.

This leaflet is also available in audio, large print, Braille, and other languages upon request. For more information, please ask in the department/ward.

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