

Energy Conservation Tips

Conserving energy during regular daily activity helps decrease fatigue. How you stand, walk and move your body, as well as the spacing of your work area, can affect your energy use. The following information provides helpful tips for conserving energy. Saving energy may decrease your level of fatigue.

Planning and Organizing

Try to plan activities daily and weekly. Try to alternate activities that require a lot of energy with tasks that use less, and delegate as much as possible. This helps you to get tasks done. It also allows others, who want to help, to feel useful. Eliminate steps or tasks that are not essential by combining chores or errands. Arrange the household so that most activities can be done on one level. Organize ahead of time so you don't have to rush.

Pacing

Balance activities with equal amounts of rest. Stop to rest before you get tired, even if in the middle of a task. Do not rush to do everything in one day. Develop a routine to prevent overdoing. Overdoing it may make you so tired that you need more than one day to recover. Try to avoid spurts of activity as this can drain energy. Pace each activity performed accordingly on good days as well as bad days.

Positioning

Sit to do activities whenever possible. Use assistive devices to help you maintain good posture while walking or moving. Examples of assistance devices are walkers, scooters, canes, handrails, crutches and grab bars. This equipment can save energy by allowing you to do things without having to bend or reach.

Avoid heavy lifting such as children, groceries and laundry. Use carts or wagons to move things from room to room or place to place. Wear a fanny pack, carpenter's belt, a jacket or sweater with pockets to carry things.

Prioritizing

Focus on things you enjoy. Be realistic with yourself about how much you can do. For example, make a list of all your activities for the day and number them according to priority. Perform activities with the highest priority first.

When You Are Too Tired to Eat

When the thought of cooking or eating a meal makes you tired, let others help prepare or bring food. Family and friends usually like to help. You can also use canned, frozen or other prepared foods, order out or ask about community resources that deliver prepared meals.

On days when you feel well, cook extra food. Freeze it in small containers. Heat this food on days when you are tired.

Eat small, frequent meals rather than several large meals each day. Have snack foods readily on hand. Keep favorite foods and beverages in a cooler close by so you can eat while resting. Make quick meals with a microwave or blender.

Tips to Preserve Energy

To help with dressing:

- Loose-fitting clothes are easier to get on and off.
- Bring your foot to your knee to put on socks and shoes so you won't have to lean over.
- Wear slip-on shoes or shoes that have Velcro or elastic shoelaces.
- Use a long-handled shoe horn or sock aid.
- For women, fasten bra in front and turn it to back.
- Wear clothes that button in front rather than pullovers or clothes with back buttons.
- Use a reacher or dressing stick to help with zippers in back.
- Place chairs throughout home to allow rest stops.

To help with grooming and bathing:

- Wash your hair in a shower rather than over a sink.
- Use a terrycloth robe instead of towels to dry off.
- Use organizers to keep items within reach.
- Use a chair in the shower or tub.
- Use a long-handled sponge or brush to reach your back and feet.
- Rest your elbows on a computer or dressing table to avoid leaning unsupported.
- Use long-handled brushes or combs to avoid holding arms overhead.
- Use liquid soap or soap on a rope.
- Use an elevated toilet seat.

To help with housework:

- Spread tasks out over the week or month.
- Hire help.
- Use long-handled dusters, mops and dustpans.
- Use an automatic washer and dryer if possible.
- Use a lightweight iron.

To help with shopping:

- Make a list and organize by store aisle.
- Request store assistance.
- Have groceries delivered if possible.
- Shop at less busy times.

To help with meal preparation:

- Assemble all ingredients before starting.
- Use mixes or pre-packaged foods.
- Use cookware you can serve from.
- Use small, lightweight appliances and other labor-saving devices.
- Buy utensils that fit comfortably in the hand.
- Store frequently used items at chest level to minimize bending or reaching.
- Line ovens and drip pans with foil for easier cleanup.
- Let dishes soak rather than scrubbing them.
- Let dishes air-dry.

To help with childcare:

- Plan activities or outings at a place that will allow you to sit or lie down.
- Take advantage of day care programs.
- Teach children to make a game of household chores.

To help with work:

- Plan your work around your best times of the day.
- Organize work centers so equipment is within easy reach.
- Create shortcuts.
- Take rest breaks.
- Work partial days if possible.

To help with leisure activities:

- Plan activities that allow you to sit or lie down.
- Plan social events at your peak energy time.

Additional helpful tips include:

- Install and use ramps.
- Use a lift chair.
- Use cruise control when driving.

Resources

Read the American Cancer Society's booklet at www.cancer.org/acs/groups/cid/documents/webcontent/002842-pdf.pdf.