

Occupational Therapy

How to Conserve Your Energy Everyday

When you feel tired all over your body, all of the time, it is called 'fatigue' (sounds like 'fah-teeg'). Fatigue is common when you are sick or managing an illness.

Everything you do during the day needs energy. This includes taking a shower, getting dressed, making meals, cleaning, doing laundry, driving, and going to work.

To do your everyday activities you need enough energy in your body.

There are ways to help you have enough energy to do more and feel less tired. We call these **Energy Conservation** techniques. By saving your energy, you can have more energy to do the things you enjoy.

The first step is to decide what is important to you and then set priorities.

Here are ways to help you save energy every day.

Are you doing any of these right now? What could you start doing?

Personal Care

Taking a bath or shower

If bathing is tiring for you, try taking a bath or shower every other day. Take a sponge bath instead.

Use a shower chair or tub transfer bench to sit on. It is easier to get in and out of a tub with a chair, instead of sitting in the bottom of the tub.

Use a hand-held shower head if you are sitting on a chair so you can control the water flow.

Use a long-handled sponge to wash your back and feet.

Instead of drying off with a towel, put your bathrobe on right away. Leave it on until you are dry.

Getting dressed

Sit down in a chair to get dressed.

Choose clothes that are easy to wear and loose fitting. Look for clothes that:

- do up in the front
- pull on
- have zippers, elastic waistbands, large buttons, or Velcro

Use tools to help you dress, such as:

- a long-handled reacher
- a long-handled shoe horn
- a sock aid (this is a tool to help you pull on your socks without bending forward).

In the Kitchen

Setting up your kitchen

Think about where you put items.

- Keep things you use often near each other and within easy reach (around the level of your waist).
- Store clean dishes you use every day in a drying rack or stacked on the counter.
- Store heavy items on the counter.
- Put items back where they belong.

Think about the items you use.

- Use lightweight utensils and pots, such as aluminium instead of cast-iron.
- Use sharp knives.

Grocery Shopping

Plan your meals in advance.

- Choose recipes that do not require constant stirring or attention.
- Choose one pot meals such as casseroles, soups, and stews.

Plan your trip to the grocery store.

- Make a list of items you need and take it with you to the store.
- Go to a smaller store to limit how much you need to walk.

At the grocery store:

- Use a shopping cart and place heavy items near the handle.
- Ask someone to help you reach high or low items in the store.
- Ask to have your bags packed lightly so they are easier to carry.

When unpacking groceries:

- Use a small wheeled cart to bring groceries into your home a few bags at a time.
- Sort groceries on the counter.

Preparing food

Buy pre-cut vegetables.

Plan meals that are easy to prepare.

Set out all of the items you need before you start.

Make extra food so you have enough for another meal or two.

Use non-stick pots and pans so you don't have to scrub much to clean them.

Sit as much as you can.

Washing dishes

Let pots and pans soak in hot soapy water if food is stuck on.

When washing dishes:

- Sit on a high stool to wash your dishes.
- Let dishes air dry in a drying rack on the counter.
- Use a dishwasher.
- Sit on a chair to load and unload your dishwasher.

Put a few dishes away at a time.

Around the House

Cleaning

Plan ahead and set priorities.

- Do one heavy job a day
- Clean one room at a time
- Have a basket or small bag at the bottom of the stairs to collect items. Take them up on your next trip.

Keep your home tidy every day, so there is not as much to clean.

Use a bucket with a handle to carry cleaning supplies.

To keep from bending often:

- Sit to clean when possible. For example sit on a chair in the bathtub or shower stall to clean.
- Use a long-handled dust pan to pick up dirt.
- Use long-handled reacher to pick up items off the floor.

Making your bed

Make one side of the bed at a time.

Use lightweight blankets.

How to Conserve Your Energy Everyday - *continued*

Doing laundry

Carry laundry in a rolling cart or laundry basket.

If your laundry is downstairs, throw the clothes down to the bottom of the stairs instead of carrying them.

Sit on a chair to put clothes in and out of the dryer.

Sort clothes on a table or counter.

Remove clothes from dryer and fold them right away rather than ironing them.

When ironing, use a lightweight iron and sit to iron.

Doing outdoor chores

Take rest breaks.

Use a folding or rolling stool so you can sit as much as possible.

When mowing the lawn:

- Use a lightweight mower.
- Spread the mowing over several days.

Use lightweight tools.

Use a wheeled cart to transport items.

Working around Home

Collect all of the supplies you will need, before starting an activity.

Keep similar tools items together.

Store tools at a height level between your knees and shoulders.

Sit when you can.

Use both hands for an activity.

Use electric tools instead of hand tools.

Hire someone to:

- clean your house
- do your yard work

Have your groceries delivered.

Now, take time to make a plan. Which of these Energy Conserving techniques will you do?

In the next week, I will:

In the next month, I will:

If you have questions about conserving energy, contact your occupational therapist.

_____ (OT) (____) _____ - _____

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This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.