

How to Save Your Energy

Sometimes people have trouble doing the things they want to do because they are too tired or have shortness of breath (SOB). Being over tired and/or having SOB can be caused by many things. In order to get things done, you may push yourself too hard and become short of breath and more tired. The next day can be even harder and the cycle begins.



The cycle of being too tired and/or having shortness of breath happens because you only have so much energy. This handout will help you learn ways to get things done and have energy left to enjoy your life. Your goal is to reach a balance between work, rest and leisure activities.

Keys to Success

Here are 4 important things to think about:

1. Pacing
2. Priorities
3. Planning
4. Positioning



Remember:

- Used pursed lip breathing to help shortness of breath during any activity.

1. Pacing

Learning to pace yourself gives you more energy.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Rest before you get tired. Listen to your body and take a break.
- Learn to relax. Being tense uses energy. Your muscles are tight and working when you are tense. Learning to relax helps your muscles rest.



- Find a pace that suits you for each activity. Pay attention to the amount of time it takes to do an activity and how you feel. For example, if you take 15 minutes to wash and dress and get tired, you are doing this too fast. Slow down and follow your own timeline. Take as long as you need to wash and get dressed without feeling tired.



- Use slow, flowing movements instead of rapid and jerky movements. For example, get up from a chair gently and smoothly. Avoid jumping up and running to answer the phone. Sit in a chair close to the phone or keep a cordless phone with you.

- Balance rest and activity. Break tasks up with rest periods. You do not have to finish a task before you stop and rest.



- Never hold your breath. Use pursed-lip breathing to avoid getting short of breath.

2. Priorities

- When you are tired or short of breath you cannot do everything you want to do. You need to learn to decide on the most important activities. These are called priorities.
- Make a list of the activities you would like to do. Then put each one in a chart to help you decide how to set your priorities. **Remember that this is your list to help you save energy.** The chart on the next page shows some examples of the types of tasks you may want to do.



| Daily Tasks | Weekly Tasks | Monthly Tasks |
|------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| wash | laundry | wash car |
| dress | iron | clean floors |
| groom | vacuum | take a trip |
| make bed | grocery shop | mow lawn |
| work | dust | go to movies |
| do a hobby | take garbage out | home repairs |
| watch TV | garden | pay bills, banking |
| read newspaper | go bowling | committee meeting |
| do dishes | go to knitting group | volunteer |
| prepare meals | go to church | |
| get mail | | |
| take medications | | |
| visit or call a friend | | |

- Ask yourself if you really need to do that task. If your answer is no, take the task off the list. Ask others to do these types of tasks. Now you have set your priorities.



Now you try:

| Daily Tasks | Weekly Tasks | Monthly Tasks |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
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3. Planning

When you plan ahead you can cut out the extra steps and save energy.

Here are some helpful hints:

- Try to plan the amount of activities in each day that you know you can complete without getting too tired or short of breath.
- Remember to pace yourself and rest.
- Look at your priority list and plan these first.
- Think about an order of activities that makes sense for you. For example, if you have house cleaning on your daily list plan to dust and vacuum one room. See how you feel before you do each activity. Stop before you need to.
- Ask yourself if you really need to do this task today. If the answer is no, take it off the plan. For example, instead of drying the dishes or making the bed, do something you want to do.
- Keep the plan open so you can leave time free. When you are flexible you can have time to add extra things in if you feel able.
- Mix up heavy and light activities. For example read or work at the computer, then take a shower or put a load of laundry on.
- Mix up sitting and standing activities. It takes less energy to sit. You also use different muscles for each position. Change positions and keep your muscles from becoming too tired.
- Pick the best time of day to do heavy tasks. Each person is different. You may have more energy in the morning or in the evening.
- Break activities into small parts or steps. For example, cut some vegetables, cook and then rest.



4. Positioning

Help prevent being over tired or becoming short of breath by picking the best position for you and your equipment. Avoid bending, twisting and stretching. Organize the tools you need to save energy as well.

Here are some helpful hints:

- You may find it hard to breathe in some positions. Some positions can also make you feel more short of breath. Avoid these when you can or change positions more often.
- Design your activities so you can do them in sitting and standing positions. This allows you to move from one position to another during the task. Shifting prevents your muscles getting too tired. For example, use a high stool to wash dishes and alternate between sitting and standing.
- Arrange the work area to allow you to sit in a good position. Sit up straight so your breathing muscle, called your diaphragm, can help you breathe better. Good posture also helps prevent back pain.
- Avoid lifting and carrying.
 - Use a cart with wheels.
 - Push the cart instead of pulling.
- Use good lift and carry methods:
 - Carry the load close to your body.
 - Lift less and make more trips.
 - Avoid twisting.
 - Move your feet around so your body stays straight.
 - Avoid holding objects with your hands for a long time.
 - Use suction cups or clamps instead.



- Use both hands to do things such as opening a window or picking up an object.
- Organize storage and work areas to avoid a lot of walking, bending, carrying or reaching. Extra movements waste energy.
- Adjust your work surface to you can reach without lifting your arms up high or bending to reach down.
- Store items you use most often between your waist and shoulder height.
- Make use of pegboards, countertops, lazy Susans and slotted drawers and cupboards.
- Keep equipment you need close by.
For example, store car wash supplies in the garage or close to back door. Keep one set of cleaners in the bathroom and another in the kitchen.
- Work within easy reach of tools you use the most. Avoid bending, twisting and stretching.
- Choose the best tool for the job:
 - Lightweight is best
 - Long handles help prevent stooping and bending
- Keep tools in good working order. For example keep knives and scissors sharp.



Ask for Help

Your occupational therapist can help you find ways to save your energy and be less short of breath.

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| Remember to Pace, Prioritize, Plan and Position |
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Your occupational therapist is: _____

Call: 905-522-1155 ext. _____



Notes: