



Save Your Energy

Tips to make daily activities easier to do

This handout gives tips to help you save energy while doing your daily activities. Following these tips will help you participate in more activities, but within your physical limits.

Pace Yourself

- Take your time with your tasks. Avoid rushing or working under pressure.
- Plan your day so that you go back and forth between harder and easier tasks.
- Rest often, before you feel tired.
- Try to avoid situations that will cause you physical or emotional stress.

Support Your Body

- Sit to do your work as much as possible. A firm surface with armrests is best. Avoid soft couches and chairs.
- Remember that higher seats are easier to stand up from than lower seats.
- Adjust work areas to be at waist height for most tasks.
- Bend your knees or squat if you need to pick up something. Do not bend your back.
- Keep your elbows below the height of your shoulders as much as possible. Keep your arms close to your body during activities.
- Use 2 hands whenever possible.
- Avoid heavy lifting, pushing, and other arm movements that make your arms tired.
- Breathe evenly. Do not hold your breath during activities.
- Stand and sit up straight. Good posture helps save energy.
- Use adaptive equipment to make your daily tasks easier.
- Avoid climbing stairs as much as possible. Use elevators or escalators whenever you can.

Organize Your Home

- Store items where you use them most often.
- Put items you use the most on the counter. A little clutter is better than having to reach.
- Store other items you use a lot above the height of your waist.
- Make sure items are easy to reach, so that you do not need to bend or stretch.
- Throw away things you no longer need.

Plan Your Self-Care

Getting Dressed

- Dress your lower body first, and then your upper body.
- Put on your underwear and pants at the same time, so you only have to stand once to pull them up.
- Wear clothes that open in the front. Clothes with buttons, hooks, or zippers in the back are hard to put on and take off by yourself.
- Avoid wearing clothes that are hard to get on or off.
- If they give you enough support, wear slip-on shoes. Do **not** wear slip-on shoes if you need foot or leg braces.
- Raise your feet to tie your shoelaces. If your feet do not fit on the surface you are sitting on, use a footstool. Or, wear shoes with elastic shoelaces or Velcro straps so that you do not have to tie and untie your shoes.
- Use a long-handled shoehorn to avoid bending when you put on your shoes.

Personal Hygiene Tasks

- Sit for longer tasks, such as hair care, putting on makeup, or shaving.
- Support your elbows if the activity takes longer than 5 minutes.
- Try to limit the number of times you have to reach over your head. This will be easier on your heart and less tiring.
- Use a washcloth to rinse your face instead of leaning into the sink to splash water on your face.
- Do not use scented soaps, powders, or aerosol sprays. These products make it harder to breathe.

- Wash your hair in the shower instead of in the sink.
- Keep your hair in a style that is easy to care for. Choose a style that does not require you to have your hands above your head for very long.
- If your blood levels allow you to brush your teeth and gums, use an electric toothbrush. Ask your doctor if this is OK for you.

Bathing or Showering

- Sit on a chair, stool, or bench in the shower.
- Install and use grab bars. Put nonskid strips or a rubber mat on the shower or tub floor for safety.
- Use a long-handled brush or sponge. This will decrease how much you have to bend and stretch.
- Use warm water for your shower. Very hot or cold water causes more stress on your body.
- Sit down to dry yourself.
- Put on a terry cloth robe to help absorb water in places that are hard to reach.
- Try using a hand-held showerhead.
- Rest before, during, and after taking your shower.

Meals

- Plan your meals ahead of time.
- Use recipes that are easy and quick to make.
- Eat light meals. Eating big meals can make you more tired.
- Prepare extra portions and freeze them for later. Heat them to eat on days when you are too tired to cook.
- Sit as much as possible when you are preparing food and when you are cleaning up after eating.
- Slide heavy objects along the counter instead of lifting them.
- Use a microwave oven for easy cooking and reheating.
- Use tools and appliances to make preparing food and cleaning up as easy as possible.
- Use a wheeled cart to carry plates, utensils, and food from the kitchen to the table. Use the cart again for carrying used dishes to the dishwasher.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

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- Use a dishwasher. Let dishes you wash by hand air dry instead of drying them yourself.
- Keep a list of items you need to buy. This will help you make fewer trips to the store.
- Organize your grocery list based on where the items are in the store. This will help shopping go more smoothly and quickly. Or, have your groceries delivered.

Make Household Tasks Easier

Cleaning and Dusting

- Keep cleaning tools in the area where you will use them.
- Keep small items in a small basket with a handle for easy carrying.
- Use a cart to store or move heavy items.
- Make sure mops and brooms have long handles, so that you have to bend less.
- Ask your doctor if it is OK for you to use a vacuum cleaner. It may be too stressful. If you can use a vacuum, be sure to use attachments to make the job easier.
- Use a dustpan with a long handle.
- Use reachers.
- Break down your cleaning tasks into steps. Do these steps over several days rather than trying to do them all in the same day.

Laundry and Ironing

- Remove permanent-press clothes from the dryer when they are still a little damp. They will need little or no ironing.
- Use a cart when moving clothes to be folded or hung on a clothesline.
- Sit to sort and fold clothes.
- Sit to iron.

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