



MDwise

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Conserving Energy When You Have COPD or Other Chronic Conditions

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Overview

Sometimes daily activities can be exhausting when you have COPD, heart failure, or another long-term (chronic) condition. You may feel at times as though you've lost your ability to live your life.

Conserving, or saving, your energy means finding ways to do daily activities with as little effort as possible. With some planning and a few tips, you can get tasks done more easily and enjoy your daily routine.

Planning daily activities

Here are some ways you can conserve your energy when doing daily tasks.

- Make a list of what you have to do every day, and group the tasks.
Group the tasks by location so that you do all the chores you have in one part of your house at around the same time.
- Go out for errands or do chores at the time of day when you have the most energy.
- Leave plenty of time to do tasks or get to events.
Adding extra time will keep you from feeling rushed and breathless.
- Include rest periods in your day.
- Ask for help from family or friends for chores that are too tiring to do by yourself.

Getting around and doing activities

Here are some ways you can conserve your energy when moving through your day.

- Move slowly when you walk or do an activity such as housework.
- Sit down (on a high stool) as often as you can when you get dressed, do chores, or cook.
- Use a raised toilet seat.
- Use a cart with wheels to roll items, such as laundry, from one room to another.
- Push or slide boxes or other large items instead of lifting them.

- Limit the trips you take up stairs.
 - Use a downstairs room for your bedroom so you won't have to take the stairs as often.
 - If you can afford it, think about getting an electric lift to take you up the stairs.

Reaching for and grabbing items

Here are some ways you can conserve your energy when you need to reach or grab something.

- Put things you use the most on shelves that are at the level of your waist or shoulder. Bending down and reaching up can make you tired quickly if you have trouble breathing.
- Use long-handled grabbers or other tools to reach items on a high shelf or to pick up things off the floor.
- Use long-handled dusters when you clean the house.

Bathing and dressing

Here are some ways you can conserve your energy when bathing and dressing.

- Sit on a shower chair or stool while you bathe. Also sit down while you shave or put on makeup.
- Sit down (on a high stool) as often as you can when you get dressed.
- Wear tops and sweaters that have zippers or buttons so you don't have to pull them over your head.

Eating

Here are some ways you can conserve your energy when eating.

- Try eating small, frequent meals instead of three larger meals so your stomach is never too full. A full stomach can push on the muscle that helps you breathe (your diaphragm) and make it harder to breathe.
- If you get too tired to eat much, try to eat higher-calorie but healthy foods. Have a yogurt-and-fruit smoothie for breakfast. Put avocado on a sandwich. Or add cheese or peanut butter to snacks.
- If you don't feel very hungry, try to eat first and drink water or other fluids after meals. This will help you keep from losing weight. Sip small amounts of fluids if you need to drink while you eat.

Having sex

Here are some ideas for making the most of your intimate time with your partner.

- Think about what could help you be more comfortable. Share your thoughts with your partner, and come up with solutions together.
- Be well rested before having sex.
- Choose the time of day when you have more energy and when breathing is easiest. You might want to avoid times when you've just eaten or had alcohol or when it's hot or humid.
- Clear your lungs beforehand. Use your bronchodilator medicine before you have sex. This can improve your shortness of breath.
- Take your time, take it easy, and enjoy one another.
- Try a side-by-side position. It can be less tiring.
- Let your partner know when you need them to take the more active role.
- Stop and rest if you have trouble breathing.

- Talk with your doctor if you or your partner is worried about having sex. Your doctor can give you support and advice.

Credits

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