

Appendix I: Energy Conservation Tips

Energy Conservation means avoiding fatigue by finding the easiest ways of doing your work, and achieving a good balance between work and rest.

General Principles of Energy Conservation:

Pacing:

- Balance activities and rest
- Steady work = decreasing efficiency
- Periodic breaks = maintained efficiency
- Rest following meals
- Use slow rhythmic movements

Planning:

- Time management is important
- Develop a healthy schedule

Prioritizing:

- Set priorities
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks

Posture:

- Make correct use of your body in all tasks
- Keep your work within easy range
- Change positions frequently
- Make sure your work is at the proper height

Proficiency:

- Organization is essential
- Use equipment that is best suited to the job, and which requires the least amount of work

Ways to Conserve Energy:

1. **Control Your Breathing:** Use breathing control during activities to help reduce shortness of breath and fatigue. Exhale during the strenuous part of an activity and use pursed-lip and diaphragmatic breathing.
2. **Eliminate Unnecessary Activities:** For instance, use a terry robe after showering to avoid the work of drying yourself, and allow dishes to air dry after washing.

Sit for as many activities as possible. Sitting uses 25% less energy than standing.

3. **Get Assistance:** Don't be afraid to ask for assistance when necessary. Some jobs may be too difficult to do alone. Or, there may be a task that you dislike doing, and which someone else may enjoy doing for you. Asking for help does not mean you are dependent; it means you are using your energy to its best advantage.

4. **Organize Your Time:** Plan daily and weekly schedules so you are doing the most energy-consuming activities at the time of day or time of week when you have the most energy. Alternate difficult and easy tasks. Take planned rest periods. Keep your schedule flexible and allow for the unexpected.
5. **Organize Your Methods:** Repetition of new methods will allow things to become automatic, and the more proficient you are, the more energy you save.
6. **Organize Your Space:** Organize your most used items in drawers or shelves that are between waist and shoulder level, so you won't have to stoop or stretch to reach them. Keep items in the area in which they are used, in order to avoid unnecessary walking and carrying.
7. **Pace Yourself:** A slow, steady pace consumes less energy. Do one activity at a time and use slow, smooth movements. Rushing only increases discomfort.

Be certain to alternate periods of work and rest. Try to plan out your activities in steps, so if you start to get short of breath you can stop and rest when necessary, instead of working faster and harder in order to finish.

8. **Maintain a Good Posture:** One of the easiest ways to save energy is to use your body properly. When the body is in proper alignment, less effort is required to maintain that posture.

Avoid bending.

Avoid lifting. Push, pull or slide instead. If you must lift and carry, lift with your legs, use both hands and carry close to your body.

Be certain to choose a work height whereby you can maintain good posture and eliminate strain from any segment of the body. Experimenting at different heights by adjusting either the height of the chair or the work surface is the best method of deciding which height is the most comfortable.

9. **Relax:** Relaxation can help restore energy. Sit in a comfortable chair with your back supported, shoulders relaxed, arms resting in your lap with elbows slightly bent and palms up and feet flat on the floor. Concentrate on relaxing your muscles and slowing down your breathing. Remember: tension only uses energy!
10. **Use Proper Equipment:** Use the right tool to do the job. For example, use long-handled equipment to avoid reaching or bending, use equipment to stabilize items in order to avoid holding, and use trolleys or bundle buggies to do your carrying.

Reprinted with permission: Canadian Lung Association.

Reference: The Lung Association (2005a). Breathe Easy – Management of COPD: Coping strategies, conserve your energy. Lung Association [Electronic version]. Available: <http://www.lung.ca/copd/management/coping/energy.html>