

The Occupational Therapist can help you to plan your day, or specific activities to help you to conserve your energy.

## Exercise

It is important to try and stay as active as you can to prevent your muscles becoming weaker, to maintain fitness levels. It will also help to prevent the fatigue cycle by balancing rest with activity.

## Relaxation

If you are tense and anxious your body will use more energy, and this can worsen your fatigue. Relaxation can be used daily to help top up your energy levels and re-charge your battery. You may find it difficult to relax and switch off due to ill health and worries and concerns. It may also be more difficult to use previous methods of relaxation such as going for a walk, swimming, gardening, or having a soak in the bath, and it may be helpful to learn specific techniques to help.

Your Occupational Therapist can help you to find the methods that are best for you.

## Equipment

There are various items of equipment available which may help you to save energy. You could ask to see the Occupational Therapist/Physiotherapist who would be able to assess you and advise you on these. Some items you may need to purchase privately but others are available through social services.

**Your Occupational Therapist/physiotherapist will offer you help and advice to help you to use this information effectively.**



# Managing Fatigue

*Information for patients*

## What is Fatigue?

Fatigue can be described as an overwhelming, persistent tiredness that can have an impact on all everyday activities. Individual's who are fatigued may want to sleep more, however, fatigue is often not relieved by sleep.

It is quite common for people with fatigue to avoid activities due to a fear of becoming more fatigued. This can lead to decreased activity and exercise tolerance, which in turn leads to having less energy and increased fatigue. This then can become a difficult cycle to break.

If you suffer with fatigue, it may not be possible to eliminate the feeling completely; however there are some useful energy conservation strategies that can help you to manage it.

## Energy Levels

It is important to try and understand and recognise your own energy levels and limits. It may be helpful to think of your energy as like a re-chargeable battery. That you have a set amount of energy to use during the day and once this is used, your battery needs to be re-charged.

Before you were ill, you were likely to be able to drain your battery of energy throughout the day and then re-charge it at night with sleep. If you are not well you have a smaller amount of energy in your battery. You therefore need to find ways of conserving energy as well as having rest periods to help expand the level of energy available to you.

If you stop and have rest periods during the day before you get too tired you may find you can expand your available energy

When you are well



When you are unwell



## Energy Conservation

Energy conservation is conserving (saving) your energy. It means finding the easiest way of doing a task, using the least amount of energy so that you have energy left to do the things you want to do.

### Energy Conservation Strategies – Prioritise, Plan and Pace

**Prioritise** (choose what activities are most important) – When you have a limited amount of energy available to you, you need to make sure that the energy you are using is on the activities that are most important to you. Consider whether you can accept help with some of the other activities, or whether they could be carried out another day. Priorities are very individual. For example, it may be important to one person to spend their energy getting washed and dressed in a morning, but you may decide to accept some help with personal care, to save energy for visiting friends and family.

**Plan:** It is important to try and think about the tasks that you want and need to do. Try and spread your tasks throughout the week, rather than fitting them all into one day. It may help to keep a daily and weekly diary (see the resources at the end of this handout).

When planning your day, try and plan to do the highest energy / heaviest tasks at times when you feel at your best. Also, make sure you plan in rest and relaxation times to prevent yourself becoming over fatigued.

Plan individual activities – for example, when cooking, gather all the items needed so you have them all to hand, such as cookery items, pots and pans. Consider whether you can sit to save energy, and can you simplify the task by using labour saving devices such as an electric mixer and microwave.

**Pace:** Try to slow down and pace individual activities. For example, when showering, try not to rush showering, getting dried and dressed. Consider sitting on a shower stool to shower, using long handled washing aids / sponge to minimise bending. After the shower, sit on a perching stool in the bathroom in a towelling robe to dry and ensure you rest before dressing. When dressing, consider loose clothing, dress your lower body first as this requires the most energy and minimise bending by using long handled aids like a helping hand and long handled shoe horn.

With all activities, try and become aware of your limits and stop and rest before you become overtired.

# Daily Plan

Day:

Date:

Time	Activity	Priorities
8-9am		
9-10am		
10-11am		
11-12pm		
12-1pm		
1-2pm		
2-3pm		
3-4pm		
4-5pm		
5-6pm		
6-7pm		
7-8pm		
8-9pm		