



COVID PHYSICAL THERAPY

Energy Conservation Strategies

After a hospital stay or long illness, it is normal to feel weaker and more tired. You may find that you have less energy to do the activities you normally do at home. Energy conservation strategies are ways that you can save energy while doing your daily activities. They help you find a balance that will get you through each day without leaving you exhausted. Think of each day like a marathon: if you go too fast or work too hard at the start, it will be tough to make it to the finish line. As your energy levels increase and your strength returns, you will find that you need to use these techniques less often.

Ask yourself: "Are there ways I can make activities easier for myself while I am recovering?" Below are four ways to think about conserving your energy throughout the day:

Prioritize

- Make a task list. Figure out which tasks take priority each day.
- Do the most important task first so it gets done and you have time to rest later. For example, if you need food, food shopping is more important than laundry. If you have no more clean clothes to wear, laundry is more important than sweeping the floor.

Plan

- Plan out your activities and gather what you need ahead of time to minimize your effort, like the number of times you have to go up or down stairs.
- If you know certain tasks will be harder for you, alternate them with easier ones. For example: walk the dog (harder), make coffee (easier), put away laundry (harder).
- Avoid staying up late. Get a good night's rest so you are recharged in the morning.
- Ask for help when needed.

Pace

- Schedule short rest breaks every day, and rest before you get tired.
- Don't hold your breath with harder activities, like climbing stairs or lifting groceries.
- Practice slow and steady breathing, and other techniques like pursed lip breathing to control your breath.

Position

- Sit down to do an activity whenever possible.
- Sit upright, not slouched, to get more air into the lungs.
- Limit activities that require standing, squatting or bending over for a long time, like gardening

Cooking Examples: Sit down to prepare food, like chopping vegetables or mixing ingredients. Rest after moving heavier items. Cook in larger quantities and freeze some for later. Position items you use often in easy to reach places on shelves and in the fridge.

Bathing & Dressing Examples: Sit down to get dressed or undressed, shave or dry your hair. Use slip-on shoes or a long-handled shoehorn if bending over leaves you short of breath. Use a stool so you can sit down while washing. Know that the moisture and high humidity level of the bathroom during a shower or bath can make you feel tired as well.

Pro Tip: Time your rest breaks. Every day is different, but noticing when you can tolerate shorter or fewer breaks more consistently is a great way to measure your progress and know you're getting stronger!