



## *Information for You from Your Health Care Team*

### **Energy Conservation and Work Simplification**

After an injury or illness, you may find that things that were once easy, now take more effort. You may also find that you have less energy by the end of the day.

#### **Pace Your Activities**

It is important to find a balance between activity and rest. This balance will prevent increased stress on your body and prevent you from becoming too tired.

- Rest for 5 to 15 minutes for every hour you work.
- Establish a slower, steadier pace for heavier
- Avoid fatigue by alternating medium to heavy tasks with light tasks.
- Avoid activities like lifting a child that require a sudden burst of energy.

Use proper breathing techniques during activities to prevent fatigue and shortness of breath. Take a deep breath in before starting the task, exhale when you are performing the task.

#### **Use Good Body Mechanics**

Good body mechanics involves learning how to use your body right so you do not stress your joints. These body mechanics tips can help you reduce your pain or fatigue.

- Use good posture.
- Distribute your load by using larger joints for carrying (i.e. use a backpack or shoulder bag for carrying).
- Use body leverage; carry things close to your body or slide heavy objects rather than lifting them.
- Move or change your position often to prevent stiffness and pain.
- Adjust your work heights to reduce straining of your neck, back, or arms.
- Limit overhead work and change hands when doing repetitive or prolonged activities.
- Use reachers instead of bending to get something from the floor.

## Setting up Your Environment

Arrange your home to help you to simplify daily tasks and conserve your energy.

- Use space efficiently by making specific work areas.
- Arrange frequently used items within easy reach.
- Use electric appliances; sit for cooking and cleanup.
- Use long-handled tools or other equipment in the kitchen, bedroom or bathroom
- Identify things in your environment that may decrease your fatigue or improve your safety at home. (i.e. use exhaust fans, install rails, remove throw rugs)
- Gather necessary items using a tray, utility cart or basket to transport them.
- Install grab bars in the bathroom.
- Use a bath stool.
- Use a bedside commode or a raised toilet seat.
- Keep a chair near your work area.

## Planning Ahead

Take time out to plan before you start out the day or begin an activity. If you plan out the way you will accomplish all that you need to do, you may decrease the amount of fatigue you experience after.

- Organize your day; space out tasks that consume more energy and include rest periods in your schedule.
- Set realistic priorities for each day and week; before each activity, ask yourself if it is something you really need to do now.
- Don't try to do everything at one time.
- Break up big jobs into smaller ones (i.e. one load of laundry each day instead of 5 loads one day a week)
- Organize your work areas; eliminate non-essentials-gather all materials you need to avoid unnecessary trips on the stairs or to different rooms in your home
- Keep things in easy reach (i.e. keep things you use all of the time on the countertops.
- Determine if there are some heavier tasks that you can have help with (i.e. carrying groceries, laundry, lawn work, snow shoveling)

## Managing Your Stress

Be aware of how your body responds to stress (i.e. headache, upset stomach, stiff neck). Try out different ways to deal with stress and prevent pain and fatigue that may result from stress.

- Plan ways to deal with situations that you know may be stressful; spend time relaxing before you are faced with them.
- If you know something specifically stresses you, limit your exposure to it.
- Find positive ways to express yourself; join a support group or talk with a physician or other health care worker, or member of the clergy. Learn relaxation techniques:
  - Breathing exercises
  - Muscle relaxation
  - Meditation
  - Social/leisure activities
  - Exercise
  - biofeedback

Physical activity should be a part of your daily schedule; it helps you sleep better and recover from stress more quickly. Check with your doctor if you plan to try a physically-demanding activity you have not tried before.