



Living Well – Energy and Activity

Fatigue or tiredness can be a common symptom in many long term conditions. Tiredness makes you feel less motivated to keep active, which means that often you avoid activities. This can lead to you having less energy, which in turn can make you more tired. When this behaviour becomes a habit, the cycle can often be difficult to break.

We can not necessarily take away your tiredness completely, but there are a number of ways in which you can manage it, which may help you to continue to do some of the things that you would like to do.

TOOLKIT

1. Getting to know your energy levels
2. The 5 P's
 - a. Planning
 - b. Pacing
 - c. Prioritisation
 - d. Positioning
 - e. Permission
3. Walking and climbing stairs
4. Eating and drinking

1. Getting to know your energy levels

Energy levels

Learn to understand your energy levels and try to get to know where your limits lie. Think about it in terms of having a fixed amount of energy to use each day, some people imagine this to be a jar or jug of energy or liken it to a battery. This energy is only topped up overnight. Consider what you would like to use your energy on, but always leave something in the jar so that it is never empty. Even if you make the best plans, there is always a chance that something unexpected might crop up that uses more energy. So it is always good to keep some energy in reserve.

Monitoring your energy

It is often useful to keep a track of the activities that you do within your day and week and monitor how you are feeling at different times. This might enable you to see if there are any patterns and if there are any times of the day and week which are better or worse for you.

2. The 5 P's

It is important to try not to use up any energy unnecessarily and there are also many ways in which you can do this. You might do things in a slightly different way which take less effort or ask someone else to help. When thinking about how to save your energy it might be helpful to consider the following things:

Planning - Consider which times of the day are best for you and plan activities around this time. Try to space activities out during the week and not concentrate all activities into one day.

Pacing - Slow down your activities as this will take less energy. Slow down when you talk, laugh, eat or cough – these actions can affect your breathing pattern. Break down your activities into smaller tasks that are more manageable. Allow yourself some time each day to try to relax. Remember that it is better to take a little extra time to complete one task and be able to continue than to finish one task quickly and feel too tired to continue

Prioritising - When you have a fixed amount of energy to use, it is worth having a think about which activities are most important to you. Sometimes it can help to write everything down that you would like to or need to do. Then think about whether these activities are high, medium or low priority for you. When planning what activities you are going to do, concentrate on the high priority things first and then work your way through to the medium priority activities. It might be that you don't get round to doing the low priority activities or ask someone else to do these.

Positioning – Try to avoid too much bending and twisting which can be tiring. Don't sit or stand in the same position for too long without changing your position. Think about trying to organise your home so that things are easily accessible (for example in the kitchen, have frequently used items to hand). It is less effort to push, pull or slide objects so try to avoid carrying heavy things.

Permission – If you are placing high expectations on yourself, it is worth having a think about allowing yourself to do things in a different way that helps with your energy levels. Try to be patient with yourself and give yourself time to do things. Whilst it is usual to reflect back at times, it is not so helpful to think about the things that you could do or the way in which you could do it before your energy levels were limited. Try to recognise the things that you are achieving.

3. Walking and climbing stairs

- Pace your breathing to your steps; breathe in over one step, breathe out over the next two steps.
- Move at a comfortable pace and breathe steadily. Avoid holding your breathe or trying to move too fast.
- Use walking aids if they help you. You can discuss this with your physiotherapist.
- Stop and rest whenever you need to.
- Have resting points at the top and bottom of the stairs and remember to count your breathing.
- Use the handrail when climbing stairs, take the steps slowly, one at a time and stop to rest when you feel the need to.

4. Eating and drinking

- Take frequent small meals, rather than one large one.
- Eat smaller mouthfuls.
- Avoid foods that are difficult to chew, add sauces when possible.
- Drink sips of fluid frequently to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Consider using frozen vegetables / mixes or pre-prepared foods.
- Freeze food left over to be used another day.
- Try to cook vegetables together to avoid using lots of saucepans.
- Use a vegetable basket to drain water rather than lifting heavy pans.