

# HOW TO BETTER USE YOUR ENERGY:

Techniques from the Toronto Adult Cystic Fibrosis Clinic, Toronto, Ontario

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## Why is it important?

Using your energy to your advantage will allow you to do more, reduce effort, feel more at ease, and to do it better.

## General Tips for Saving Energy and Making Your Activity Easier

- Plan ahead and choose to do the tasks that you feel are most important: consider the details of each given activity and begin with the most important task, continuing down as time and energy levels allow.
  - Switch often between doing hard or heavy work (i.e. mowing the lawn) and lighter tasks (i.e. folding laundry).
  - Divide heavy tasks into smaller chunks throughout the day or week, and plan do them at times when you have the most energy.
  - For stair climbing – plan ahead so that you can reduce the number of trips.
  - STOP your activities BEFORE becoming exhausted. Short rest periods more often are the best method in the long run.
  - Concentrate on relaxing your muscles and slowing your breathing; tense muscles only waste energy.
  - Sitting while completing a task takes up 25% less energy than standing. Make sure you change positions to avoid fatigue.
  - You use less energy when you move at a moderate pace, and you make fewer mistakes.
- It is OK to ask loved ones for help in performing tasks you find difficult; do not be afraid as they are there to help you.
  - Use proper body posture to help reduce feelings of tiredness. For example, if you must lift, lift with your hips without bending forward, use both hands and keep it close to your body, preferably in front.
  - Use your strongest muscles, so that you use the least amount of energy. Pushing, pulling or sliding heavy objects takes less energy than lifting.
  - Consider factors like design and ease of use when purchasing products and tools
  - Put the things you use the most at arm's length.
  - Keep a healthy frame of mind and maintain a flexible plan to allow for the unexpected.

## Specific Household Activities:

### Bathroom:

1. Showers use less personal energy than taking baths.
2. Using tools such as a hand-held shower, a bath seat, bath-brushes, and a terry-cloth robe to reduce the amount of energy you use.
3. To clean the bathtub, use long-handled sponge or mop; sitting at the side of the tub while you do so. Start to clean the tub before you get out of it.

## Kitchen:

1. Sit whenever possible for some counter activities (washing dishes, cutting vegetables, etc).
2. Work at comfortable levels so you don't strain yourself.
3. Get all your items out at once.
4. Perform activities in the sequence which requires the least amount of movement.
5. A table on wheels (or trolley) is an energy efficient way to carry tools, dishes, groceries, and cleaning supplies.
6. An apron with large pockets is handy. Long tongs are ideal for reaching.



7. As needed, choose recipes with less preparation time. Also, convenient foods that still allow for a healthy diet save time: soup-in-a-cup, instant oatmeal, cake mixes and frozen foods can be eaten.
8. Use kitchen equipment with dual purposes when possible, e.g. oven-to-table dishes and pots.
9. A "lazy-susan" cabinet (i.e. rotating shelves) can be used for dishes or small groceries.
10. Wall-hanging dispensers are handy.
11. Washed dishes may be rinsed and left to dry in the drying rack.
12. Long-handled mops and dustpans eliminate stooping and bending, and you can use a small amount of water in a light pail for mopping (preferably, on wheels).



## Bedroom:

1. To get OUT of bed, turn on your side and come up, pushing with both your arm and elbow, swinging your feet over the side of the bed.
2. To get INTO bed and lie down, sit and slide back onto the bed, lying down on your side and bending your knees.
3. When making the bed, try to avoid lifting the mattress; tuck the sheet in with palms down rather palms up
4. Uses fitted sheets if possible, or do no tuck in non-fitted sheets. Choose light-weight and easy care (non-iron sheets) bedding.
5. Avoid repetitive motion or smoothing out bedding.



## Caring for Children:

1. Lower the side of the crib to remove the child, to avoid the strain of vertically lifting children out of playpens.
2. Use a change/bath table at a comfortable level.
3. Avoid the strain of lifting children out of playpens whenever possible.

4. If possible, plan sit-down activities like arts and crafts rather than active games like tag.

### **Sweeping, Mopping and Vacuuming:**

1. Operate a light-weight upright vacuum with short gliding strokes as opposed to strenuous pushing and pulling. A portable hand-held vacuum can be used for easy cleanups.
2. Use long-handled dust pan or when using a short dust pan bend at your knees.
3. When vacuuming under a bed or table, bend at your knees to reach, or sit in a chair.



### **Dusting:**

1. If possible, try and avoid dusting as much as you can. However, if you need to the following tips may help.
2. Do not over-stretch, use a long-handled mop and long-handled reachers or pick up tongs may assist you.
3. A feather duster is suggested when dusting; dust tables using both hands at a smooth and moderate pace.

### **Laundry:**

1. Use a laundry basket on wheels to take clothes from the washer to the dryer.
2. Place the basket on a chair; this saves lifting it from the floor.
3. Do small loads of laundry at one time. Ask for help carrying it if needed. Consider putting your laundry in a bag and roll it down the stairs; or divide the load and carry part of it in each arm

### **University Students**

1. First and foremost, ensure that professors and others who need to know are informed of your health status, and what you can and cannot do with respect to deadlines and etc.
2. As much as possible, try and buy your textbooks online to reduce your carrying load.
3. Study on campus or in the same building of your class to reduce walking from home/residence to school and back.
4. If you feel exceptionally tired, try and see if there are online lectures you can watch from home and see if a friend or classmate can email you the assigned work.
5. Be honest with yourself and do not overextend your energy.
6. Pack a lunch from home or buy from the school cafeteria to reduce walking home and back.
7. Using, renting and buying tablets such as the Ipad may help reduce carrying loads as finances permit.
8. Try and request a room or apartment on the lower floors to reduce trips up the stairs. Likewise, try and request a room close to the bathroom if you are in residence.
9. Speak to your doctor and care team if you start feeling very unwell.

