

Shopping

- Plan your shopping route to avoid becoming exhausted.
- Organise your shopping list by aisles to reduce the length of the route.
- Seek support from friends, neighbours or relatives to help with larger and heavier items.
- Arrange a home delivery service, even if only a temporary arrangement.

Safety:

- Remember basic falls prevention techniques.
- Ensure open walkways through your property.
- Remove any rugs or other tripping hazards.
- Use the walking aid issued to you.
- Know your own limits.

The role of equipment:

Equipment and assistive technology can be highly beneficial in reducing the demands of certain tasks or activities:

- Think about using long-handled aids to reduce the need to bend/stretch, e.g. use a 'helping hand' to pick things up and dress.
- Use electrical items to reduce the demand of a task, e.g. an electric toothbrush or can opener.

- Buy a perching stool or find a suitable chair – useful in the kitchen during meal or drink preparation, or in the bathroom while washing and dressing.
- If you usually walk with a wheeled Zimmer frame, consider a caddy – which provides a suitable platform for carrying meals/drinks.

Equipment will only be provided by an Occupational Therapist in the hospital if considered essential for you to remain safe at home. Equipment can be purchased privately from many disability shops locally, or online.

Please ask the Occupational Therapist if you have any questions about this leaflet.

Contacting us

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Managing everyday
activities with
shortness of breath
or an increased
breathlessness
Information for patients

The aim of this leaflet is to provide general advice, hints and tips on how to manage daily life at home whilst you are experiencing shortness of breath or an increased breathlessness.

General energy conservation tips:

Think about your breathing and its impacts on your daily function, and remember the

4 Ps:

Pacing – break activities into smaller steps interspersed with periods of rest in order to reduce fatigue or pain. Listen to your body, about what it can and cannot manage.

Planning – look ahead and develop a strategy for managing/completing tasks. Plan a week in advance to ensure strenuous tasks do not all take place on the same day. Use a simple to-do list / calendar.

Prioritisation – prioritise what is important / enjoyable to you with your existing energy. Delegate jobs that are not necessary for you to other people to retain energy for those things you want to do.

Positioning – be aware of your physical position in relation to the activity in hand. Reduce over-stretching/standing for long periods. Organise your work space so things are in each reach.

Activities of daily living:

Grooming

- Sit down to clean your teeth, shave, wash your face or apply make-up try. It reduces the energy spent on standing. Use a suitable stool, perching stool or the toilet.
- Use your stronger arm for activities, if possible.
- Use easy-to-grip, large handle items. Rubber bands around a handle provide a better grip.

Dressing

- Sit down during dressing to reduce the risk of falls and maintain energy.
- Wear loose fitting or elasticated clothes that are easy to put on, e.g. can be put on, over the head in a seated position.
- Consider a button hook if you experience problems with doing up buttons.
- If reaching your feet is difficult, consider a long-handled shoe horn and a sock aid.

Showering/Bathing

- Wash your lower half first and then your top half. It takes more energy to bend/stretch.
- Bring your legs up to your chest, as opposed to leaning down to your legs.
- Consider a shower stool or a bath board.
- A long-handled sponge can help reduce the need to bend.
- Keep showering items within easy reach.

- Use a basket to keep items tidy.
- Hot water and steam can increase shortness of breath. Use lukewarm water and keep the door ajar to let out steam.

Other activities:

Cooking

- Plan meals ahead – assemble all ingredients/utensils beforehand.
- Make larger portions and freeze meals for use when you are particularly fatigued.
- Use light-weight cook wear if possible.
- Use paper plates/plastic cups to eliminate washing up.
- Use electrical appliances to conserve energy e.g. can openers, blenders, dishwashers.

Housework

- Sit to do tasks, rather than stand to save energy.
- Break down activities into small but manageable chunks.
- Have frequent short breaks between activities.
- Avoid lifting items. Slide them across work surfaces if safe to do so.
- Try creating a weekly housework plan – do not try to complete all tasks in one day.
- Use long-handled equipment to avoid bending down e.g. dustpan and brush.