Energy conservation

It is important to make the most of the energy we have and limit the effects of fatigue.

Energy conservation involves looking at everyday activities and seeing if there is a more energy-efficient way of doing them.

For some people day-to-day activities in the home, at work and in leisure can cause extreme fatigue.

The idea is that at the end of the day you will have completed everything that you wanted to do but will feel less tired.

Your occupational therapist will:

- teach you a more efficient method of carrying out a task to preserve your energy levels.
- provide you with adaptive equipment that will help you to carry out a task independently but using less energy.
- offer advice regarding the adaptation of your home or work environment to allow you to carry out your daily activities using less energy.
- help you to set realistic and achievable goals.

The main principles of energy conservation are:

Prioritise
- Identify which activities are most important to you.
- Are friends or family able to offer support.

Plan
- Become aware of when and why you have less energy to carry out tasks. Keeping an ‘energy diary’ throughout the course of the week may help with this.
- Balance exercise with rest.
- Plan your day around your physical tolerance. Consider how much energy is needed for each task.
- Organise your home and work areas so that items used most frequently are close to hand.
- Eat a well-balanced diet and avoid heavy meals. Excess weight, alcohol and smoking can make fatigue worse.

Pace
- Try to create a balance between rest and activity and try to rest following a meal.
- Try to take regular breaks during your daily activities.
- Try to use a diary to pace activities throughout the day or week.
- Try to adopt a regular routine and get a good night's sleep.

Posture
- Maintain an upright and symmetrical posture.
- Sit rather than stand and rest on a perching stool where possible.
- Sit in a supportive chair with a high back.
- Avoid excessive twisting and bending.

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Helpful hints:

1. **Control your breathing.** By relaxing your shoulders and allowing the rise and fall of your stomach as you breathe in and out. Exhale during the strenuous part of an activity.
2. **Eliminate unnecessary activities:** For instance use a dressing gown after showering to avoid the work of drying yourself and allow dishes to air dry after washing. Sit for as many activities as possible. Sitting uses 25% less energy than standing.
3. **Get assistance:** Don’t be afraid to ask for assistance when necessary. Some jobs may be too difficult to do alone or there may be a task that you dislike doing and which someone else may enjoy doing for you. Asking for help does not mean you are dependent, it means you are using your energy to its best advantage.
4. **Relax:** Relaxation can help restore energy. Sit in a comfortable chair with your back supported. Tension only causes fatigue.

Useful contacts

**Aids and equipment**
**Freedom and Independent Living**
Boyatt Shopping Centre
Shakespeare Road
Eastleigh SO50 4PQ
Tel. 023 8061 4654

**Red Cross (Totton)**
The Health Centre
Testwood Lane
Totton SO40 3AP
Tel. 023 8074 3241
Open Monday to Friday
10am to 12pm

**Red Cross (Romsey)**
10 Great Well Drive
Romsey SO51 8QN
Tel. 01794 513202
Open Monday to Friday
10.30am to 12.30pm

**Red Cross (North Baddesley)**
Red Cross Room, the Health Centre
Fleming Avenue
North Baddesley SO52 9EP
Tel: 023 8074 3405
Open Monday to Friday
10am to 12pm

**Occupational therapy department**
at Southampton General Hospital
on 023 8079 6456