

Advice on daily living for patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)



Information for patients

Therapy Services - Surgical



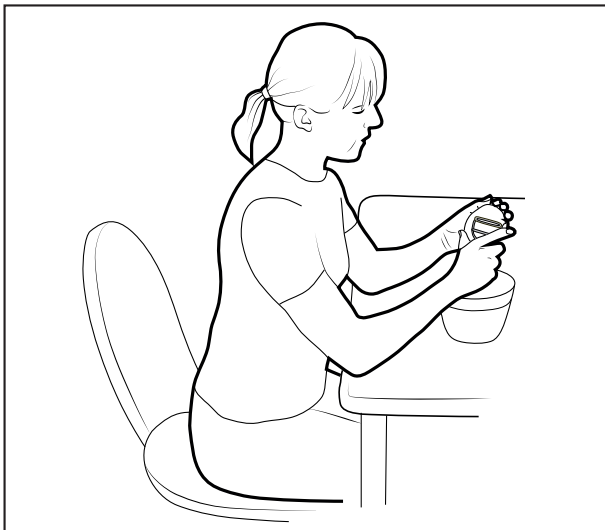
People with COPD often have problems with breathlessness, walking and everyday tasks. This can mean that they become less active and lose general fitness. This is why it is important for you to keep as fit and active as possible but, to do this, you may find that you need to adapt how you do things to cope with your shortness of breath.

This leaflet gives you some advice on how to make the most of your energy during the day. If you have any problems understanding any part of this advice or would like more information, ask to speak to an Occupational Therapist (OT).

General advice

Remember that your energy levels may fluctuate within the day and from day to day. To effectively conserve and make the most of your energy you will need to:

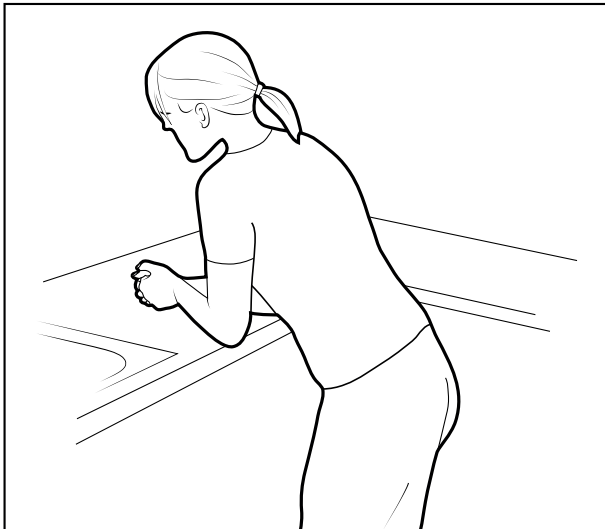
1. **Organise** - Always make sure that you have everything you need before you start the task.
2. **Plan** - Do the task at the best part of the day for you. Do you need to do it today or can it wait? Spread tasks evenly throughout the day.
3. **Pace** - Don't rush to do the task all in one go, take your time and rest both before and after doing the task.
4. **Adapt** - Change how you do things so that they are easier, for instance, cook a meal in one pot and sit down to prepare it.



5. **Posture** - Keep your shoulders back and relaxed rather than hunched over. Don't over reach for things as this can strain your back. If you are lifting things, get as close as possible and keep your back straight.

6. **Breathing** - Try to use the correct breathing techniques that your physiotherapist will show you. If you become breathless, stop and concentrate on getting your breath back.

Try leaning forwards onto a window sill or worktop.



If you use oxygen at home try using it during and after tasks that you find difficult.

Tips to making life easier

There are other things that you can do to make it easier to carry out specific tasks. These are given below:

Washing and dressing

- Wear loose comfortable clothes
- Avoid tight belts and restrictive undergarments
- Get all the items you need to wash or dress together beforehand
- Do the task in stages
- Sitting down to dress and wash can make the task easier
- If you struggle to reach your feet, the OT can show you some aids
- Use a towelling bathrobe after bathing as this reduces the amount of drying you have to do and you can rest and dry at the same time
- If humidity affects your breathing, leave the bathroom door open when having a bath or shower

Household tasks

- Get everything you need together before you start
- Do the task in stages
- If you can sit to do the task, do so
- Keep things you use everyday close to hand
- Rest before and after each task

Cleaning

- If dusting or working at dusty jobs, make sure you have a window open and use a damp cloth.

Laundry

- When emptying the washing machine, take only small amounts of washing out at a time
- When hanging washing out, use a chair to bring the basket to waist height

Making beds

- Use loose sheets top and bottom under a duvet as this will mean you don't have to change the cover so frequently.

Shopping

- Avoid carrying heavy bags
- Use a trolley rather than a basket
- Shop more frequently and buy less each shop
- Plan menus in advance so you buy only what you need
- Use a list and get to know the layout of the shop so you cut down on how much walking round the shop you need to do
- Try to shop when it is quiet
- Ask for help with packing

In the kitchen

- Cook larger quantities of food and freeze meals for use on days when you have less energy
- Avoid putting heavy things in low or high cupboards
- Use a jug to fill the kettle enough for what you need. Full kettles are heavy.
- If cooking is a problem for you, then ready meals can help
- If you have problems with walking, a trolley could help with carrying things about the kitchen
- Let your pots air dry
- Rest after any meal and before you clear up

Stairs

- Stairs can be a problem, so we may help you practice getting up and down stairs before you leave hospital. If you cannot manage the stairs we will discuss your other options with you.
- Take your time
- Rest often
- Put a chair at the top for you to sit and rest on
- Plan so that you can cut down on the number of times you have to go up and down stairs.
- If possible, keep a supply of your medicine / inhalers both upstairs and downstairs

Bed time / sleep

- Get ready for bed in stages
- Have easy access to a light at night
- Find the best combination of pillows to help you sleep
- Try using a back rest
- Keep to a regular night time routine even if you don't feel tired.
- Relax before bed – read or watch TV
- Make sure you are not too hot or cold at night
- Try having a milky drink to help sleep
- Have a pad and pen handy to write things down that are on your mind

If you struggle getting to the toilet at night or your toilet is downstairs, speak to your OT.

If you need any aids to help you with your daily activities, your OT will order these for you.

If you are worried about managing at home, speak to the OT.

Equipment ordered:

If you wish, you can use this space to record any questions or queries you might have when you next see the therapists.

Your notes:



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