

# COPING WITH TIREDNESS

## (HOW TO CONSERVE YOUR ENERGY)

It is very common to feel very tired if you have a chest, heart or stroke illness. Sometimes this tiredness can feel overwhelming and leave you with little energy, or motivation, for everyday tasks.

Tiredness affects everyone differently. As well as a general lack of energy you may also:

- Find it hard to concentrate or make decisions.
- Feel irritable and get upset easily.
- Have difficulty remembering things.
- Have interrupted sleep.
- Withdraw from family and friends.

Learning ways to conserve your energy can be very helpful. Useful tips include:

### Get good quality sleep

It is important to get as good a quality of sleep as possible. A few hours deep and restorative sleep is more beneficial than hours of poor quality sleep.

Prepare your mind for sleep by getting into a routine before retiring.

Have a warm bath to relax you and take a hot malt or milky drink.

Don't start jobs before going to bed or think about things that upset or worry you.

Avoid caffeine and alcohol in the evening.

### Energy giving foods

Aim to eat a well balanced diet with foods rich in iron and vitamins (e.g. liver, spinach, fortified cereals). Slow burning carbohydrates are good as they provide energy gradually. Examples include: whole grains, pasta, rice, cereals, oats, beans and lentils.

Sweets and chocolate give you a rush of energy that only lasts for a short time so try not to eat these regularly.

Eating small meals more often is easier for the body to digest than 3 large meals. It also helps to provides energy more evenly throughout the day.

Cook when you have more energy and freeze some of the prepared food for the days that you feel tired.

Have a stock of healthy ready made meals for the days when you don't feel like cooking.

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## **Save energy!**

Use a trolley, or shopper, to gather things that you need from around the house to do something. This saves going back and forwards to get things you need.

Rest your arms on a surface, or pillows, while using your hands to do something e.g. chopping vegetables.

Slide heavy or awkward items rather than lift them.

Sit for as many activities as possible e.g. ironing.

Use a stool in the kitchen when preparing / cooking food.

Let dishes drip dry or invest in a dishwasher.

Use a towelling bathrobe to dry off after showering.

Shop on the internet or from catalogues. This gives you the chance to choose what you want and get things delivered at a time that's convenient to you.

Put most frequently used items in drawers or shelves that are between waist / shoulder level.

Keep items in the area where they are going to be used to avoid unnecessary walking / carrying. Ask someone to help you reorganise your space if necessary.



## **Pace yourself**

Give yourself time to do things.

Alternate work / chores and rest by doing things in small stages.

Do most energy consuming tasks at the time of day / week when you have most energy – but be flexible and plan rest periods.

Don't be tempted to overdo it on a good day as you will be overtired the next day.

If you find yourself very tired one day think back to what you did the day before as you may have done too much. In this way you can learn to adjust what you can do without taking too much out of yourself.

Consider keeping a diary and keep a note of the times of the day when you are most tired. This can help you discover any patterns to your energy levels and you can plan to rest at these times.



### **Avoid unnecessary movements that use most energy**

Avoid bending – use a ‘grab’ stick if necessary to pick up items from the floor or garden.

Avoid lifting heavy objects.

Avoid raising your arms – try to have everything you need at waist / shoulder level.

### **Try to maintain a regular programme of gentle physical activity.**

Gentle physical activity (e.g. walking or swimming) may help to increase energy levels and promote a restful sleep.

Relaxation techniques, yoga / gentle stretching may also help.

Remember to pace yourself!

### **Get assistance**

Domestic chores use up a lot of energy and you could get help with them. Friends and family could help with shopping and housework or social services may be able to arrange help for you. It doesn't mean you are becoming dependent, it means you are using your energy to its best advantage.

### **Don't be afraid to ask for help!**

If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence,  
please call the Chest, Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line  
**Monday - Friday 9.30am - 12.30 and 1.30pm - 4.00pm**

**0845 077 6000**