

# Energy conservation

## What is energy conservation?

Energy conservation involves implementing strategies to adapt the way you carry out daily activities. It enables you to:

- prioritise and engage in the most essential tasks
- ensure the environment is set up in the most efficient way possible
- use your energy wisely.

Conserving energy is important to ensure you have energy left for activities you like to do, not just those you have to do. Energy conservation strategies can benefit a wide range of people including people experiencing chronic pain, fatigue, or illness, people with physical, cognitive, or psychosocial disabilities, seniors, people recovering from illness or injury, caregivers and those experiencing stress and mental fatigue or burnout. Managing energy involves managing physical energy as well as mental/cognitive energy. Sensory and emotional demands can also drain energy for some people.

The aims of energy conservation strategies include:

- To improve self-efficacy by empowering individuals to undertake meaningful activities and have greater control over their lives
- To improve quality of life by facilitating people to be able to participate in more meaningful activities that contribute to their overall well-being
- To minimise symptoms of chronic illness or disability and prevent exacerbation of symptoms through overexertion
- To reduce stress and prevent physical and emotional burnout
- To support a gradual and sustainable recovery from illness or injury



Believe and Become, through the REACH UP initiative, is proudly delivering projects for the Peer Support and Capacity Building (PSCB) grant for the NDIS, including this free resource.

## The 6 Ps for energy conservation



- **Prioritisation:** Identify and prioritise essential tasks. Focus your energy on high-priority activities and consider postponing or delegating less critical ones. Set realistic goals and try to create a balance between activities you need to do and those you want to do.
- **Proper Planning:** Plan your activities and tasks in advance to avoid unnecessary energy expenditure. This includes scheduling breaks and allocating time wisely. Break down tasks into smaller parts. If you need to run errands, try to complete those in similar location on the same trip.
- **Positioning:** Arrange your environment to minimise physical strain. Keep frequently used items within easy reach to reduce unnecessary movement and effort. Sit down to complete tasks where possible and take regular rest breaks.
- **Pacing:** Pace yourself throughout the day. Avoid overexertion by breaking tasks into manageable chunks and allowing time for rest in between. Allow extra time to complete tasks so you don't have to rush.
- **Posture:** Maintain good posture to prevent fatigue and strain on your body. Proper body mechanics can contribute to energy conservation.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Regularly assess and monitor your energy levels. Adjust your activities and strategies based on how you're feeling to prevent burnout and optimise energy conservation. Try to focus on your progress and what you have achieved.



## Other energy conservation tips

- **Time Management:** Allocate specific time slots for activities and for rest breaks in between. Use a schedule, diary, app or other tool that works for you to help.
- **Delegate:** If possible, delegate tasks to friends, family, or formal supports. It's okay to ask for assistance.
- **Use Adaptive Tools:** Invest in tools and equipment that make tasks easier.
- **Energy Budgeting:** Recognise your energy limits by keeping a log (see below) and planning your day accordingly. Allocate energy for important activities and rest.
- **Learn to Say No:** Understand your limits and don't be afraid to decline additional commitments to focus on your well-being. Identify what is important to you; this can help you decide what to say no to.
- **Mindful Rest:** Practice mindfulness and relaxation techniques to recharge. Breathing exercises, yoga, gentle movement or music can all be restorative.
- **Energy-Efficient Environment:** Organise your living and working spaces to minimise the effort needed for daily tasks. Keep frequently used items within easy reach.
- **Meal Planning:** Prepare and freeze meals in advance to save energy on cooking. Consider easy-to-make, nutritious options, good quality pre-packaged meals, or services such as Meals on Wheels if available.
- **Regular Exercise:** Engage in gentle, low-impact exercises if possible. Consult with a healthcare professional such as a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist for a suitable routine.
- **Sleep Hygiene:** Ensure a comfortable sleep environment and establish a consistent sleep routine to optimise rest.



## Using a pacing system

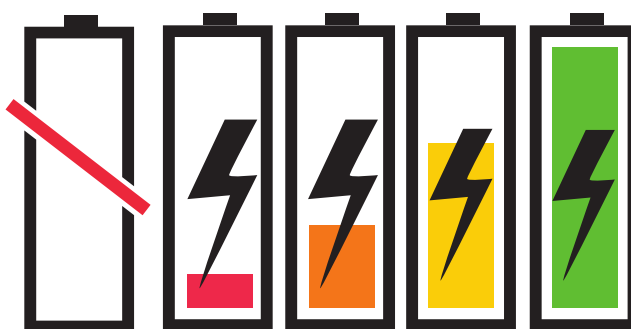
Pacing systems are a tool to help you monitor and manage your energy levels sustainably. There are several pacing systems, including spoon theory, energy accounting, and the traffic light pacing system, which is described briefly here:

- **Red light activities** require a significant amount of energy, whether it's social, physical, or emotional energy. They deplete energy reserves and may intensify pain.
- **Yellow light activities** are neutral or moderate in their energy use, and less demanding than red light activities. They are not restorative.
- **Green light activities** are easy and restorative and can replenish your energy bank.



### Using the traffic light pacing system:

- Map your daily/weekly activities and identify which activities are red, yellow, and green light activities. This will help you identify patterns. There is a template to try at the end of this document
- Reflect on your body's responses (physical, emotional) to each type of activity.
- Consider how many red light activities you can manage in a day, and in a week
- Consider how many green light activities are needed to recover from a red light activity
- Consider how you can effectively space your red light activities with yellow and green light activities
- Consider which green light activities provide the most restoration, and ensure you schedule time for them
- Notice the patterns - if your energy is lower at particular times of the day, try to avoid more demanding tasks at that time and complete them when you have more energy.



# Practical tips for specific activities

## Showering/bathing

- Sit down whilst showering (use a shower chair/stool or a bathboard)
- Install a grab rail to hold on to
- Install a hand-held shower hose to direct the water flow where you want it
- Use a long-handled sponge to reduce bending
- Reduce the water temperature, excess steam can cause discomfort or shortness of breath. Ensure there is good ventilation to the bathroom
- Consider whether a full shower is needed everyday
- Sit down to dry yourself, or use a terry towelling robe

## Dressing

- Sit down to dress
- Get your clothes ready before you shower
- Rearrange your wardrobe so the items you wear most often are in easy reach
- Wear front opening clothes (button up/zipper rather than pulling shirts over your head)
- If you are wearing overhead clothes, put arms in first
- Wear loose fitting clothes
- Use a long handled reacher or dressing aids such as a dressing stick or shoe horn
- Sit down and use a footstool when putting on shoes and socks
- Slip on/Velcro shoes will use less energy to put on (Make sure they fit well and have adequate grip)

## Toileting

- Make sure you allow plenty of time to get to the toilet so you do not need to rush
- Increase the height of the toilet if necessary, with an Over Toilet Aid or Raised Toilet Seat
- Install a grab rail next to the toilet to support safe transfers
- If you are having trouble getting to the toilet in time, try a bedside commode
- Make sure the toilet paper is positioned in an easy to reach spot that doesn't require awkward twisting or bending

# Practical tips for specific activities

## Kitchen

- Sit down where possible (position a stool at the kitchen bench)
- Try high quality frozen meals instead of cooking from scratch everyday, or a community service such as Meals on Wheels if available
- Prepare meals in bulk and freeze them
- Utilise aids including electric can openers, electric knives, tap turner, lightweight saucepans, kettle tipper, jar openers
- Let your dishes drip dry
- Keep frequently used items near waist height to try to limit bending and overhead reaching
- Consider saving time and energy by purchasing pre-prepared or frozen vegetables

## Housework and Cleaning

- Sit down for activities where possible
- Use a trolley to move items
- Use a long-handled sponge to reach high/low surfaces
- Use a mop to clean the shower/bath
- Spread out cleaning tasks over the week (eg. mop one room a day, or vacuum one day and clean the toilet another)
- Make sure to take frequent rest breaks
- Use small rubbish bags to avoid having to carry heavy bags
- Prioritise cleaning the rooms that are used most
- Consider whether it is feasible to pay for help with cleaning



## Laundry

- Use a "clothes horse" and sit down to hang out washing, or use a dryer
- Sit down to fold laundry and/or iron
- Use a laundry trolley to avoid carrying heavy baskets
- Do smaller loads of laundry
- Hang items on a clothes hanger straight away to reduce the need for ironing
- Purchase clothes that wash and dry easily and do not need ironing

## Shopping

- Shop at less busy times
- Organise shopping list by aisle (large supermarket chain Apps will sort the list for you)
- Use a trolley rather than a basket - if you don't need a lot use the smaller trolley to reduce bending into the large trolley
- Utilise benches for rest breaks
- Spread heavy items between shopping bags, not all together
- Try to pack items that belong together in the same bag (e.g. cold foods together)
- Try shopping online and having the products delivered to you
- Do your shopping with a family member/friend so you have help

# Activity and energy log

Week dates:

Day	Sleep (hours/quality)	Time of day	Activities and events (highlight each activity red yellow or green)	Symptoms - Rate 0 (none) - 5 (extreme)				Fatigue/energy levels Rate 0 (no fatigue/high energy) - 5 (extreme fatigue/no energy)	Comments
				Pain	Fatigue	Brain fog	Other (describe)		
		Morning							
		Afternoon							
		Evening							
		Morning							
		Afternoon							
		Evening							
		Morning							
		Afternoon							
		Evening							

Rating scale:

- 0 - No fatigue/symptoms - able to complete all activities
- 1 - Very mild fatigue/symptoms - able to complete all activities but perhaps in slight discomfort
- 2 - Mild fatigue/symptoms - able to do most activities
- 3 - Moderate fatigue/symptoms - able to do some activities but need regular rest
- 4 - Severe fatigue/symptoms - significant difficulty doing activities
- 5 - Extreme fatigue/symptoms - unable to complete activities, need to rest all day

## References/further information

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