Conserve Energy and Simplify Tasks

Working smart can help you save time and effort and protect your body. The principles described here can help you to complete tasks more efficiently.

**Work Simplification**
Completing a task in the most efficient and effective way to minimise time and energy expenditure.

**Energy Conservation**
Using your energy to accomplish a task in such a way, that you still have energy to do other tasks.

There are eight main principles which can be applied to everyday life. Learning to use these will help reduce fatigue and protect your joints:

- Limit the amount of work you set for yourself.
- Plan ahead.
- Organise your storage and work space.
- Sit to work whenever possible.
- Use correct equipment.
- Use efficient methods.
- Plan and include rest breaks in your day.
- Use correct body mechanics.

**Limit the Amount of Work**
Try to reduce the number of steps in a task, or even eliminate tasks that are not essential. Ask yourself:
- Why is this necessary?
- Is it worth the energy required?
- What if the task was not done?
- Is there someone else that could do it instead?

**Some Examples**
- Soak dishes to eliminate the need to scrub.
- Allow dishes to air dry.
- Use a quilt and fitted sheet.
- Choose clothes that don’t need to be ironed.

**Plan Ahead**
Prioritise and plan activities, alternating between active and quiet jobs and include rest periods. When planning, ask yourself:
- How am I going to do this activity?
- When is the best time to do it?
- Can the activity be broken down into smaller, achievable steps?

**Organise Storage & Work Space**
Plan and organise work spaces to eliminate unnecessary steps, save time, energy and reduce fatigue.
Conserve Energy and Simplify Tasks

The Independent Living Centre provides an impartial information and advisory service to help you choose the right product for you.

• Sort equipment and items into those that are:
  o Used often or
  o Used infrequently.
• Store supplies & equipment used frequently close to the work area and within easy reach. Duplicate items if necessary and store them near each work area.
• Eliminate clutter. Remove unnecessary and infrequently used items from shelves and bench tops.
• Store frequently used items between shoulder and hip level to minimise bending and reaching.
• Store heavy items that are infrequently used between hip and floor level.
• Store light items that are rarely used between shoulders and extended arm height.

Take a Seat
Sitting requires less energy than standing. Whenever possible sit whilst doing tasks, e.g. whilst ironing or when preparing meals.

Use the Right Equipment
Gather everything you need before you start and conserve energy by using equipment or utensils that are lightweight, appropriate for the task, and in good condition. Lightweight items reduce fatigue, joint stress and pain.

Use Efficient Methods
• Use larger muscle groups and joints rather than smaller ones to reduce joint stress and pain.
• Where possible, increase the length of handles on equipment as less force is required.

Work with gravity. Use wheels or slide objects rather than lifting or carrying them.

Incorporate Rest Breaks
Rest is important. Include rest breaks to increase your overall endurance, and give the body time to recover. Try taking 10 minutes rest for every hour of activity, or take regular rest breaks to suit your body and the activities you are doing.

Use Correct Body Mechanics
• Keep your head and trunk aligned.
• Keep your shoulders and hips parallel.
• Maintain good balance.
• Bend hips and knees when lifting – avoid bending from the waist.
• Push rather than pull whenever possible.
• Pull rather than lift whenever possible.
• Maintain the normal “S” curve of your spine.

Remember – aligning the body correctly places less stress and strain on muscles and joints, and reduces fatigue.

Further information:

ILC Head Office:
The Niche Suite A 11 Aberdare Road Nedlands WA 6009
Fax: 08 9381 0611    Email: general@ilc.com.au
Enquiry line: 9381 0600    www.ilc.com.au