Tips for Conserving Energy With COPD

by RUSSELL WINWOOD

COPD and Energy Conservation

There are times the symptoms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), such as being short of breath, take their toll and we just need to stop. The trap is that we need to keep as active as possible to help relieve those same symptoms. So how can we find the right balance to live as comfortably as possible?

Identify the Stress

Stress can come in many forms — the two main ones are physical and mental stress. When we talk about COPD and energy conservation, we need to identify the things in our life that suck away our energy. Of course, it's often easier said than done to remove these stresses from our lives.

Physical stress can be resolved simply by resting and recuperating. Mental stress is not so easy.

Previously, I've mentioned the use of a support network to help you out when life becomes overwhelming. Resolving the physical stress can be dealt with by calling on those close to you to lend a hand so you can recover.

If you have people willing to help, develop a weekly roster where those difficult tasks can be assigned to a family member or friend.

Mental stress comes in all forms and can be very difficult to control. This type of stress can often be responsible for a COPD patient's health to spiral out of control.

Personally, I'm an advocate of seeking professional help from a counselor. Mental health professionals can give you the tools needed to manage stress so it doesn't take over your life.

Being able to keep physical and mental stress at bay will certainly help in terms of conserving energy and achieving a better quality of life.

Creating a COPD Friendly Home

How many of you have looked around your home to identify what changes can be made to make your life easier? Enlist the help of a friend and spend some time doing an assessment of your home. Having an independent eye to help you identify areas that can be improved may bring some welcome ideas.

Some of the areas to look at could include:

- Accesses to your home and whether it can be made easier
- Hand rails on areas such as steps, bathrooms, toilets, and other areas

- Remote controls for high-use appliances such as fans and other cooling or heating systems.
- Phone access in areas of your home where you rest
- Exhaust fans in bathrooms to remove steam and to keep areas mold free
- Shelving that is easily accessible both in height and location

On the outside of your home it's a good idea to check for any plants that may cause irritation to you which may result in an exacerbation. Don't forget the garage door if you have one. Remote control garage doors can be especially beneficial for conserving energy, not to mention keeping you dry on those rainy days.

Having outside areas organized in a way that makes life easier for you will encourage you to spend more time enjoying the great outdoors.

Using these suggestions can be a good start to make your home more COPD friendly.

Next page: Read about managing COPD in the work place.

COPD and Energy Conservation in the Workplace

If you're a COPD patient still in the workplace, it's important to let your employer know about your health status. Being upfront and honest with your boss about your disease and what you need to remain a productive member is an important step. COPD patients who are still in the workforce generally are managing their disease well or are newly diagnosed.

While it might seem daunting to approach your employer about your disease, in my experience, if you're a valued employee, you need not worry. Many workplaces pride themselves on providing a good work environment for their employees.

There are simple measures that can be put in place to help make your work day a little easier.

In my country (Australia), workplaces now have to cater to all employees. One of the biggest changes in recent years has been designated smoking areas that don't impact others.

Look at your workplace like you do your home by assessing what changes could be made to make life easier. Tell your employer a COPD friendly workplace will keep you performing at your best.

A growing trend in the workplace is employees working from home occasionally. This will be very beneficial for your COPD and energy conservation plan and may be an option for you either now or in the future. Think about approaching your employer about working from home before you actually need or want to. This will give them time to transition you into a work-from-home environment.

There are many jobs that require an employee to be at the workplace every day, so working from home will not work. If you have been diagnosed early in your COPD journey, then maybe a career change is an option.

You may be able to take on a new role within your workplace which will allow you to work from home at a later stage. While retraining can be challenging, if it allows you to continue to work in a capacity less demanding, then its a worthwhile exercise.

Planning Your Pace for COPD Energy Conservation

If you're anything like me, you have experienced the fatigue associated with having to hurry because you're running late. When planning your day, it's important for your COPD and energy conservation to allow plenty of time to carry out the day's activities — from planning what time to wake up, eat meals, shower, and change clothes, to what time visitors arrive.

It's important to work out the length of time it will take you to complete tasks in order to allow yourself sufficient time not rush. I've seen many patients not take appropriate precautions to pace their day and become fatigued and run down. This can result in illness and many weeks recovering.

The use of a calendar or diary can be a good way to plan your day. If you are able to use modern technology, it's possible to share calendars from mobile phones and computers with loved ones. This not only helps you keep track of your day, it keeps loved ones informed of your tasks so they can see if you will need a helping hand.

Keep in mind the time it will take to travel to different places and allow sufficient time for traffic.

While we cannot plan for all scenarios, we can plan for many. Taking the time to think about the easiest way of completing the tasks at hand is well worth it.

Running around is not good for COPD and energy conservation. It will only compound your breathlessness and increase the chance of a nasty exacerbation. Think outside the box so you can breathe easy.