



# LUNG CANCER CANADA

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## Managing Daily Activities: Energy Conservation and Work Efficiency

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### Living Better

A diagnosis of lung cancer may result in a variety of symptoms such as **shortness of breath, limited activity tolerance, and fatigue**. These symptoms may, in turn, impact your lifestyle or your ability to carry out normal, day-to-day routines (e.g., looking after yourself, getting washed, getting dressed, managing basic homemaking tasks, working or enjoying leisure activities with family and friends).

Understanding **energy conservation** principles and implementing appropriate strategies can assist you in managing some of these symptoms, and achieve that delicate balance between rest and activity, enabling you to participate in those activities which you enjoy and which are meaningful to you.

#### Getting Started – Understanding Your Abilities

**1. Examine Your Lifestyle** – “walk” through a typical day for you and itemize those activities which you find difficult or which tend to increase your symptoms. For example:

- getting up from a low surface such as a chair, toilet, bed or sofa
- bending to reach low surfaces or to get dressed
- standing or walking for any period of time

**2. Identify Problem Activities** – review and try to find a common theme. For example:

- getting up from any surface lower than \_\_\_ inches.
- any bending activity, or activity which limits your lung expansion
- standing or walking for longer than \_\_\_ minutes
- any activity which causes you to hurry
- specific times during the day when you feel more tired or when the activities seem more difficult

### What Might Help?

#### 1. Alter your Environment

- If surfaces are too low, consider using an extra cushion on a favourite chair or in the car.
- Try to use chairs with armrests.
- Elevate the chair or sofa with blocks.
- Install a hand-held shower so you can control the direction of the water. Some people find the constant stream of water from a fixed shower head increases their feeling of breathlessness.
- Organize drawers or storage areas so that frequently used items are within easy reach.

#### 2. Utilize Self-Care Equipment

- Elevate a low toilet with a raised toilet seat with armrests, or install a comfort-height, energy efficient model. A toilet frame or wall-mounted safety bar are other options to consider if the seat height is adequate.
- Shower from an adjustable height bath chair or bench, set at an appropriate height for you. While washing, sitting is easier and safer for you and your caregiver.



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### 3. Plan and Organize daily or weekly schedules

- Plan each day to include only what you can realistically accomplish. Try to recognize your abilities and limitations. Stop before you become too tired or short of breath.
- Alternate heavy tasks, or those requiring more energy, with light tasks.
- Consider the best time of the day for you to carry out a task, including social activities and visiting with friends.
- Incorporate rest periods – frequent, shorter rests during activities are of greater benefit than fewer, longer rest periods. Learn your tolerance for sitting, standing or walking.

### 4. Set Priorities

- Look at your activities for the day and put them in order of importance. Only you can make the decision about what your priorities will be.

### 5. Pace Yourself

- Allow sufficient time to complete a task or activity. Avoid rushing.

### 6. Eliminate Unnecessary Tasks

- Plan ahead, organize supplies or work space to reduce extra trips
- Minimize stair climbing – store items on the same floor on which they will be used most often. Complete tasks on one floor before going downstairs/upstairs.

### 7. Modify your routines gradually

- Start easily. Try to do a little more each day. If you are tired or not feeling well after a change, do a little less for a day or so.

Utilizing energy conservation principles and strategies is essentially a common sense approach to living. It will help you to maintain control over your life and activities, rather than the symptoms deciding what you can and cannot do.

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