

## FATIGUE MANAGEMENT:

### Energy Conservation & Work Simplification Techniques:

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are the tasks that you perform everyday. They include everything that you do in a day such as washing, dressing, housework, employment & leisure activities. All ADLs require the body to draw on its energy.

By making simple changes to your routine or minor adaptations to your environment, it is possible to reduce your fatigue levels significantly & allow you to do more.

### **The main principles of fatigue management include:**

1. Set up proper working conditions:
  - Sit whenever possible
  - Adopt a good posture by setting up a work height that is appropriate for the job
  - Plan ahead & collect all necessary tools/equipment before starting a task
  - Schedule frequent breaks within the task
  - Work in pleasant surroundings
2. Avoid unnecessary motions:
  - Use wheels or slide objects rather than lifting & carrying
  - Clean up areas as you go along to avoid a major clean up
  - Arrange sequence of jobs to decrease repetition of movement
3. Avoid rushing:
  - Pace yourself
  - Use a slow relaxed speed
  - Work to music if necessary
  - Remember to schedule time for frequent rest breaks

It is important for relatives, friends & employers to understand your fatigue patterns & the principles you are following to manage your fatigue. This may enable them to help you make these lifestyle adjustments

### Proper breathing during activity:

#### 1. Technique:

- Never hold your breath during activity
- Inhale when lifting your arms up or when extending the trunk
- Exhale when bringing arms down & when bending the trunk
- Exhale also during any physical exertion (don't hold your breath)

### Body mechanics:

#### 1. Technique:

- Use the strongest muscle groups during activity
- Push or pull & use wheels under objects whenever possible
- When lifting make sure you bend your knees & place a chair by your side to help if necessary
- When lifting keep objects close to your body
- When climbing stairs:
  - i. Walk on the whole foot
  - i. Use hand rail for support
  - ii. Pause at least 1 second between each step

### Correct work height:

1. Make work easier with correct counter height (when standing the counter should be 2" below the height from the floor to your elbow).
2. To find the proper height for your work chair:
  - i. measure the distance from your elbow to the floor when you stand (distance A) & when you sit (distance B).  
**Distance A - Distance B = amount to be added to current chair height.**
  - ii. Or: ensure that your feet are placed flatly on the ground whilst seated with your knees & hips at 90 degrees. You should be able to work without bending or raising your hand above your elbow.

## Work Simplification:

The following are some factors which you should consider when coping with fatigue:

- Rate of work:
  - i. Simply by doing a job at a slower pace will reduce the energy needed to complete the job by up to 3 times.
  - ii. A slow, steady rate of work, with short rest periods, will get the job done without doing you in.
  - iii. Remember that fast walking takes  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times as much energy as slow walking & walking up stairs 7 times as much energy as walking on level ground.
- Rest:
  - i. Frequent short rest periods are a must whether at home or at work.
  - ii. Balance activities with rest & learn to allow for time to rest when planning a day's activities. **Pre-schedule the rest time in.**
  - iii. **Rest means doing nothing at all.**
  - iv. Frequent short rest periods are of more benefit than fewer long rests.
  - v. Listening to music or using relaxation tapes may help you to relax while resting.
  - vi. **STOP WORKING & REST BEFORE EXHAUSTION**

- Distribution of work load:
  - i. Don't try & do a two man job by your self
  - ii. *Get help with heavy work*
  - iii. Use gravity to help
  - iv. Slide rather than lift
  - v. **Alternate high energy activity with medium & low energy activity**
- Weather:
  - i. In hot weather, direct sunlight increases strain on the body so keep in the shade.
  - ii. The heart supplies a great flow of blood to the skin to keep the body cool so you can not do as much work in hot humid weather as you can in cooler temperatures.
- Physical conditioning:
  - i. It pays to keep in good physical condition through regular, moderate activity or exercise.
- Weight:
  - i. Keep your weight within the normal range. Excess weight overworks the lungs & heart & increases the amount of energy you require to carry out an activity.
- Age:
  - i. An older person cannot work as hard as they did when they were young. Generally speaking, at 50, your capacity, assuming good health, will be about 70% of what it was at 25; at 70 it will be about 50%.

- Emotions:
  - i. Worries, fears & tension will prevent you from relaxing during rest.
  - ii. Benefits of relaxation:
    - a) Helps to reduce stress & anxiety
    - b) Achieves a deeper level of rest than simply sitting
    - c) Improves energy levels
    - d) Leaves you feeling refreshed
    - e) Improves mental alertness
    - f) Rests the nervous system
    - g) Optimizes your abilities

### Top 10 tips for relaxation:

1) Wait approximately 2 hours after a meal as the digestive process can interfere with relaxation
2) Choose a quiet place free from distraction
3) Since body temperature drops during relaxation, ensure the room is warm enough or cover yourself with a light blanket
4) Clothing may need to be loosened & glasses/jewellery removed
5) Find a comfortable position, either in sitting or lying. If sitting have your head supported
6) Close/cover your eyes to avoid distraction
7) Most benefit is achieved by doing at least 20 minutes every day
8) Practice your chosen technique. Like anything new, it may take a few sessions to achieve the desired result
9) If you have any muscle weakness or spasms avoid tensing prior to relaxing
10) ENJOY

<sup>1</sup> CFS shared folder – OT folder – OT Handouts