



Tilgate Ward and Tilgate Annexe

Advice for patients on managing daily tasks

Anxiety and breathlessness

Anxiety is the feeling of worry or unease about something you are not sure about or can't control. It can be mild or severe and can last for a few seconds, or longer such as a day. Having some anxiety when you have a chronic condition can be a good thing. It can prompt you to follow your treatment plan, pay attention to your symptoms, and know when to seek medical attention.

When you are anxious your body tries to help you get oxygen to your tissues in order to fight or run away. Your breathing becomes faster and shallow to get more oxygen fast. When you have a breathing condition you may feel anxious and then have trouble breathing or you may have trouble breathing and then feel anxious about this.

When you are feeling anxious you may go to the doctors or hospital more often, but by recognising your symptoms and triggers this can be reduced. By learning coping mechanisms, it can enable you to use energy on activities that are more meaningful to you such as gardening, walking and social events.

Record your triggers

- Diary
- Mobile phone
- Talking to family and friends

Managing your triggers

- Calm your breathing – using breathing techniques
- Calm your body – use your relaxation techniques
- Calm your mind – replace your worry thoughts with calming thoughts i.e. “I am becoming calm”; “my breathing is slowing down”
- Avoid worry thoughts such as “I am losing control” or “I am losing my mind”

Energy conservation

People with lung conditions can often feel out of breath or tired when carrying out daily tasks. The aim of energy conservation is to enable you to continue participating in tasks that you want and need to do by finding the easiest way to do it and adapting your routine.

Pacing

- Plan regular rests throughout the day, between tasks, such as sitting in a dressing gown after washing before getting dressed
- Spread out chores/activities over days and weeks; avoid planning too much in one day
- Don't rush; rest during washing or climbing the stairs

Planning

Forward planning and organisation can help you use your energy more efficiently and prevent wasted energy.

- Cook in bulk on a quiet day so that you have meals ready for days when you are busier
- Avoid repeated trips up/down stairs, between rooms or to/from cupboards by planning ahead what items you need
- Ensure items you use regularly are at waist level; ask somebody to gather the items if you normally store them in high/low cupboards
- Leave yourself enough time to get to the toilet

Useful tips

- Sitting uses less energy than standing – sit on a stool to get dressed, prepare vegetables
- Keep tasks at waist level; avoid bending down; use a 'helping hand' to pick up items off the floor; a long handled sponge to wash your feet; or place your foot on a footstool to put on your socks
- Keep elbows supported and close to you during tasks to keep your chest open
- Use aids/technology to reduce energy expenditure: kitchen trolleys, electric toothbrushes/ razors/tin openers, dishwashers and tumble dryers
- Avoid lifting heavy items. Instead, push, slide or pull things where possible, e.g. kettle on kitchen worktop
- Consider a commode to save repeated trips up/down the stairs if you don't have a toilet on all floors
- Use a rucksack or over the shoulder bag to carry light items upstairs (tissues, glasses) and take an empty bottle to fill up with water if needed
- Change position frequently; this allows different muscles to work, increases circulation and prevents fatigue
- Simplify tasks: Break the activity into small steps, e.g. preparation, activity, clean-up and final phase
- Recognize emotions: Anger, frustration, anxiety, and stress all increase the heart rate.
- Try not to bottle up feelings – build your supports and talk to them
- Decide on your priorities and learn when to say "no"

Contact us

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You can also ask a member of staff to contact PALS on your behalf.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats, including in larger text.
Contact 01737 231 958 for help.

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