



## Pacing yourself



**Heart failure can affect people in different ways and many people can experience a lack of energy.**

**Symptoms such as tiredness may be constant or may occur at predictable times of the day or may even come out of the blue.**

Whichever of these applies, any lack of energy is likely to limit your activities and lifestyle, at least to some extent.

The good news is that pacing yourself can minimise this effect and help you to do and achieve the things that really matter to you.



## First steps

In order to pace yourself, you have to know your capabilities, and also your limitations. A good first step is to discuss this with a member of your healthcare team. You should talk about:

- The activities that you enjoy and want to do
- Whether these are possible for you at the moment. If not, is there any way they can be made easier?
- When you are active, how can you tell that you are doing or have done too much? What warning signs should you look out for?



## Planning ahead

Planning is a fundamental part of pacing yourself. You can use planning for all your daily activities, not just big events, so that you conserve as much energy as possible.

Why not start each week by scheduling all of the things you have to do that week (perhaps using a calendar or diary)? That way you can see where you are going to need extra rest before and after events, and you can mark that rest time on the calendar, too.

Planning ahead can also save you emotional and psychological stress. **If you are going to need assistance during a journey and with your mobility, it is a good idea to plan this in advance.**





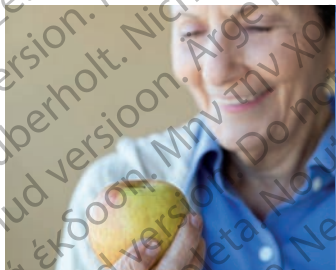


## Adapting to energy levels and conserving energy

Bear in mind also that your energy levels can fluctuate a good deal, so you may need to re-arrange events according to your changing energy levels<sup>1</sup>. For example, you may find that you have more energy in the morning than you do after midday. If so, it makes sense to consciously schedule your most demanding activities, such as work, domestic chores or showering/bathing, for the morning. Then, you can use the afternoon to achieve less demanding tasks, and to relax.

Here are some useful techniques to help you conserve energy and relax:

### MINDFULNESS



Pay attention to what is happening in the present moment, without drifting off into the constant chatter of anxious thoughts.



There are lots of opportunities to bring mindfulness into our day-to-day activities. For example, when we eat mindfully, we pay careful attention to each mouthful, the tastes and textures of our food.

### RELAXATION AND BREATHING PRACTICE

Try sitting down in a comfortable place and closing your eyes. Take slow deep breaths and notice the ends of your body expanding and rising with each breath. Breath out slowly as you go and count to six or eight. Focusing on relaxing more with each breath you take.





## Managing long-term goals

You are likely to have some longer term goals to plan for, as well as daily tasks. These may be connected to your condition — for example you may wish to lose some weight or cut down on alcohol — or attend a family event or a party for a landmark birthday.



You might find it helpful to divide one big task (e.g. organising a family dinner) into lots of little tasks (e.g. making the list of groceries, calling everyone to confirm the time, preparing the dinner table, etc.), and tackle these one at a time, at a moderate pace. If you can, consider delegating at least some of the tasks involved.

When it comes to your health goals, such as weight loss, do not underestimate the power of your healthcare team! If you talk to them about your plans, they will be able to work with you to create a realistic plan, and can probably put you in touch with other people or organisations that can help.



## Watch for warning signs

Of course, with heart failure your energy levels will be limited, and it is important to know when you are doing too much. If you are short of breath when talking, if you have palpitations or if you feel dizzy, then seek medical advice. Your healthcare team may tell you to look out for other signs too, so it's a good idea to ask them about this.

If you happen to have an urgent medical concern, please call your doctor, go to your local emergency room, or call your local Emergency Contact number. Remember, your doctor is your primary source for information on your condition and treatment. Be sure to speak with them if you have any questions or concerns.

### References

1. Lindenfield J, Albert NM, Boehmer JP et al. Executive summary: HFSA 2010 comprehensive heart failure practice guideline. J Card Fail 2010; 16: 475-539