

## Adapt: Adapting your activity and environment

Once you have a good sense of what your energy envelope is, the next step is to explore how best to adapt your activity. Building pacing strategies into your routine can help you adapt activity to stay within your energy limits and manage fatigue.

### Where is my energy at?

In the handout “Plan: How to pace” we outlined ways that you can track and plan your energy. Throughout your day, check in with your energy. Asking, “where is my energy at?” can help you to set a starting point for how much energy you will have to do activities for the rest of your day.

- Some people find that they can tell what type of day they are going to have when they wake up in the morning. They might also be able to tell how many activity hours they will have.
- Check in with yourself at the beginning of each task to determine how much cognitive, emotional or physical energy you have for the activity.



*It can feel impossible to add rest to your day. It does not have to be long. Try starting with short breaks that are five minutes or less. You can always add more time later. The key is to rest often, not necessarily for a long time.*



### Take regular rest breaks

Resting consistently throughout the day is key to pacing. Build rest breaks into your day to manage your energy.

#### Pre-emptive rest

This is when you rest before you start to feel tired. Preemptive rest will help you recharge your energy and stay within your energy envelope. Scheduling breaks throughout the day will help you build a routine with planned rest breaks.

Break times can vary: some people feel rested after a 5 minute rest, while others might need an hour or more. You may find you need a mix of rest breaks of different lengths. Plan to take your scheduled breaks even on days that you are feeling good and energetic.

#### Recovery rest

This is rest you need after you have pushed yourself, and are starting to feel your symptoms. If you know you will be using a lot of energy, for example attending an event, make sure that you plan for enough recovery rest afterwards.

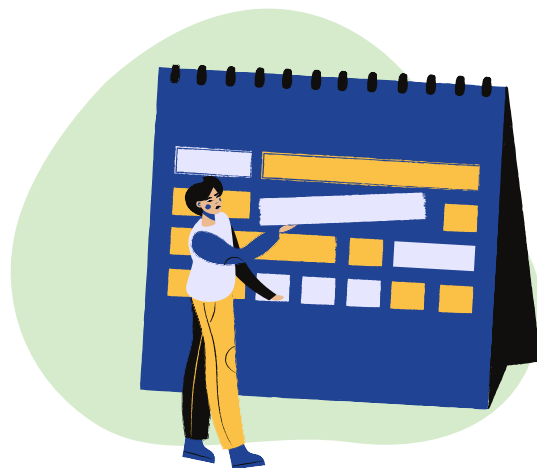
Explore different relaxation activities that can help you recover your energy. Common examples include lying down in a quiet room, listening to guided meditation, and mindful breathing. Keep these options in mind when taking rest breaks through the day.



## Break larger activities up into smaller pieces

When managing post-viral fatigue, you may find your tolerance for activity has changed. Breaking tasks up into smaller pieces can help you complete activities while staying within your energy limit. For example, when preparing food you can cut and prepare some of the food, then take a break and do the cooking at a later time.

Use the activity tolerance log to help you find the right balance between activity and rest. You can learn more about the activity tolerance log in our handout “*Plan: How to pace.*”



## Plan your day

- **Simplify, delegate, or eliminate** tasks that are not possible within your energy capacity.
- **Different energy types:** Arrange your day into a mix of emotional, mental and physical activities.
- **Task difficulty:** Prioritize tasks by how difficult they are. If you have several difficult tasks, try scheduling them on different days, so that you don't feel overwhelmed. Scheduling a mix of easy and difficult activities on the same day can help you manage your energy.
- **Time of day:** When do you feel the most energetic? It might be different for physical, emotional and mental tasks. Plan to do activity at the time of day when you have the most energy.
- **Prioritize tasks:** It will be impossible to do everything. Making to-do and not-to-do lists can help you to be realistic about what you can complete.
- **Shift the focus:** Try to shift your focus to the amount of energy you have, rather than completing a task in full. For example, vacuum for five minute periods rather than committing to vacuuming your entire space. Shifting to focusing on the time versus task completion can help to stay inside your energy envelope. This means avoiding PEM.
- **Honour your energy limit:** If something important comes up unexpectedly, switch it out for another task that you can move to another day. Avoid adding more activities to your list.

You can find more information and tools to help plan your day in our other handouts:

- “*Plan: Measure physical activity*”
- “*Adapt: Managing orthostatic intolerance*”

## Adapt your environment

Adapt your environment to conserve energy. In the handout *“Plan: How to manage brain fog,”* we talk about how different stimuli (things you can see, hear, smell, taste, or feel) might impact your fatigue. When doing an activity, check if your environment is working for you or against you.

**Reduce stimulation:** If you are sensitive to things like sound, light, smell or touch, you can make some changes to your environment so that they don’t affect you as much. We’ve listed some suggestions below.

Try using:

- Sunglasses or blackout blinds
- Earplugs, white noise, or relaxing sounds
- Noise cancelling headphones
- Air purifying plants or filters

Try reducing:

- Background noise, like the radio when driving
- Strong smells like scented deodorant/detergent
- Alerting/glaring light
- Exposure to stressful information e.g. social media/news



**Adaptive equipment:** Some equipment might offer support or help conserve energy such as a shower chair, cane, sit to stand stool, an anti-fatigue mat, or supportive shoes. For more information see our handout *“Engage: Community Resources”* under the heading *“Medical and Health Equipment.”*

**Practice supportive body positions:** Support your body throughout the day. Build awareness of postures that you find hard on your body or that are repetitive in nature.

[Explore supportive postures](#) through the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.