Lifestyle Modification

Your disease can and often does affect your daily lifestyle. Medication and exercise are important to the treatment of this disease, but rest must also be added into your daily routine. You may find that you need to alter your lifestyle. The following are some suggestions to consider as ways to modify your lifestyle so that you will be able to control your daily activities, rather than allowing your disease to do so. Keep in mind the four “Ps”: Priorities, Pacing, Planning and Positioning.

Priorities
• Make your first priority maintaining your own body functioning.
• Establish priorities to avoid overdoing.
• Realize that you cannot attend all desired activities. Know your body’s limits.
• Base decisions on the use of your time and energy according to what is important to your family.
• Get in the habit of grouping jobs according to the importance and urgency of the task.

Pacing
• Balance your daily activity and rest. An example to follow is: light activity – heavy activity – rest – light activity.
• Provide your body with rest periods. One guideline to follow is to rest 10 minutes of every hour.
• Work until you start to feel tired, then take a short rest and go back to work if you feel like it.
• Avoid fatigue. Overdoing it can lead to a flare up.
• Talk over your job with your doctor and employer to pace yourself there also. Take your coffee break when you most need it and be sure to relax and rest during your breaks.

If an activity or task makes you very tired (or causes joint pain for one or more hours), then it is probably too much for you. You might not need to give up the task, but perhaps you can change it to prevent tiredness (or pain) in one of the following ways:
– Plan rest periods. Break up the task. It may take longer, but the way you feel after it is completed will be worth it.
– Change the method. For example, if it requires a tiring or painful position, such as kneeling or stooping, use a low stool or adaptive equipment to eliminate this.
– Consider accepting help. Asking for help in a direct way is much more effective than by dropping hints. Asking for help is not a sign of giving in.

Planning
• Organize.
– Conserve energy by taking less steps – gather all supplies before starting an activity.
– Allow rest periods between tasks. Break up longer tasks with rest periods.
– Organize your work schedule throughout the week to prevent doing all heavy tasks at one time.
– Begin a task by asking the following questions and modify the task to save yourself time and energy:
  ○ What is the task and is it necessary? Eliminate unneeded tasks.
  ○ How is the task to be done?
  ○ When is the best time to do the task?
  ○ Where is the best place to perform the task?
  ○ Who should do the task? Can other family members help?
• Eliminate the hurry, confusion and pressure of big events or busy times by planning in advance.
• Know your own best speed and plan ahead. Work at a slow rhythmical pace.
• Select equipment and utensils that may be used for more than one job. Eliminate unnecessary motions.
• Have regular periods set aside for rest and relaxation.

**Positioning**

• Sit to work whenever possible. If you must sit for long periods, take breaks and walk around for a short amount of time. Adjust workstation heights so that your hands are level with or below your elbows. Jobs requiring much arm motion or pressure should be lower than those requiring hand activity.
• Lay out work areas within normal reach. Work in areas in which both hands overlap and arrange supplies in a semi-circle within normal reach. Avoid unnecessary bending, reaching and stretching.
• Have fixed work areas. Have a special place to do each job so the supplies and equipment that are used together can be kept together for immediate use.
• Preposition tools. Store small tools, equipment and utensils in such a way that they are in the right position to grasp and start working immediately. Hang them separately within sight. Lazy susan type storage, peg boards, dividers and door racks make things easier to use.
• Locate machine and appliance control switches within easy reach.
• Use both hands to carry objects.
• Use your whole body weight and leg muscles to push or pull heavy objects rather than lifting them.
• Use symmetrical, smooth motions with both hands working in opposite directions whenever possible to increase efficiency.
• Let gravity work. Rather than carrying an object, push it along the floor, if possible. Keep a wastebasket in your work area to push things into from the counter or workbench.
• Slide objects along the table top, workbench or counter rather than lifting or carrying them. Slide a pan of water along the counter from the sink to the stove.
• A wheeled cart is an excellent means for transporting heavy objects, and can also be used to eliminate back and forth trips.
• Avoid holding objects for prolonged periods. Use a holding device (lamps, Dycem, suction cup, upright mixer) to free both hands for work.

By employing these methods in your daily routine, you will maintain the highest amount of energy possible in doing the things you need to do, so that you will have the freedom to do the things that you want to do.