HOME CARE TASKS MADE EASIER
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DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this booklet is for general guidance only. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that the patient care recommendations in this book are correct and in keeping with accepted standards of practice at the time of publication no legal responsibility can be accepted for any errors or omissions that may be made.
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We all get into habits and undertake tasks, such as house cleaning in a particular way because that is the way we have always done it. But rather than simply repeating a habit, it is important to consider whether you are operating in the most effective way – in the least amount of time and using the least amount of energy. This may mean changing the way you do things or using different equipment.

This booklet has been prepared to help you think about the way you do everyday tasks, assess whether or not you are doing them in the safest and most efficient way, and modify your habits accordingly.

Five main areas need to be considered if you want to conserve your energy and simplify the housework.
1. PLAN AHEAD

• Work out a weekly routine by planning a balance of light and heavy duties spread throughout the week. (Use the table at the back of this booklet to help you plan your week.)
• Ensure you have the right equipment that will make the task easier.
• Store equipment in convenient places to reduce unnecessary steps.
• Break each activity down into a series of smaller tasks.
• Set priorities, identify tasks which may not need doing, such as ironing the sheets and focus on the tasks you feel must be done.

2. BALANCE THE WORK

• Break up the task and do not do all your housework in one day.
• Do not do more than one task for longer than 30 minutes at a time.
• Spread heavy and light tasks throughout the day.
• Assess whether you need to do all stages of a given task at once. For example, can the dishes soak before you wash them so that scrubbing is made easier? Let the water do the work.
• Can you sit while doing some tasks, such as preparing food?
3. USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

- Use lightweight equipment to reduce the strain on your body.
- Can a spray or soaking reduce the amount of work you need to do?
- Long-handled equipment can reduce strain or twisting your body.

4. DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

- Using large muscle groups and joints uses less energy and puts less strain on your body. For example, stand in a lunge position and move your whole body backwards and forwards when vacuuming, rather than just moving your arm.
- Push rather than pull an object and pull rather than lift an object.
- Minimise bending and rotating the body, keep your back straight.
- Work at a steady rate rather than rushing.
5. REST

• Rest before becoming exhausted.
• Take 5–10 minute rest breaks during any activity to increase your ability to finish the task without feeling overly tired.
• Rest improves overall endurance and leaves strength for enjoyable activities.
• Pain or soreness is a likely indication that you have worked too hard at one task.

Implementing these principles will help protect your body, minimise pain and the risk of injury and manage fatigue.

REMEMBER

• Moderation is the key.
• Rest improves overall endurance and leaves strength for enjoyable activities.
SPECIFIC HOUSEHOLD TASKS

Following is a break down of the major household tasks using these principles, suggested strategies and equipment to make life that little bit easier.

The tasks discussed include:

• vacuuming
• sweeping
• cleaning the bath and shower
• washing the floors
• making the bed
• washing clothes
• ironing
• shopping
• dusting.

Using these tips and recommendations can assist in maintaining your independence and health through active participation.
PLAN AHEAD

• Think about where and how you store your vacuum cleaner to minimise bending, lifting and carrying.
• Vacuum one room only per day to conserve your energy.
• Only vacuum areas of the house that need it. For example do you need to vacuum the spare room every time if it’s not used?
• Vacuum for less than 30 minutes at one time.
• Avoid doing other tasks requiring similar movements (such as sweeping or mopping) immediately before or after vacuuming.
• Work at a steady rate rather than rushing.
• Rest after every five to ten minutes of vacuuming.
USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

Features on a vacuum cleaner that will make it easier for you.

- Lightweight and easy to manoeuvre around
- A pipe that can be adjusted to suit your height
- Suction control that is on the body of the vacuum or on the pipe that is easy to slide (a dial on the body of the cleaner means you will have to bend over to adjust the suction)
- A long hose that is crushproof and rotates a full 360 degrees
- An on/off switch that you can operate with your foot
- A long retractable cord so you don’t have to keep changing sockets
- Cloth bags are messier and harder to empty but paper bags are sometimes harder to put into the vacuum cleaner and you need to purchase replacements. You will need to consider which will better suit your needs.
- Think about attachments that may make vacuuming easier such as a vacuum head with wheels on the side, or a cyclonic cylinder that captures the majority of the dirt and dust and is easier to empty
- Adjustable cleaning head with a switch that is easy to flick with your foot to allow you to vacuum on both carpet and lino or tiles.
- A dust indicator that lets you know when the bag is full.

A ‘dust buster’ or powered carpet sweeper fitted with an extendable handle may work well for small homes or for predominantly non-carpeted homes.
DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Adjust the pipe length of the vacuum so you can remain upright.
• Keep your hands high on the pipe.
• Wrap the hose around your back and keep your hands close to your hips so that you are pulling the vacuum cleaner with all your body.
• Put your legs in a forward lunge position in the direction of vacuuming and maintain the natural curve of the spine (‘S shape’).
• Walk back and forward with the hose rather than just pushing the hose while standing in the one position.
• Set the vacuum head to the appropriate surface, for example, have the bristles up for carpet and down for floorboards and tiles.
• Reduce the suction level to lessen the drag on thick carpet.
• Run extension cords along the wall rather than across the room or corridors.
• Avoid excessive bending and standing with your feet together.
BALANCE THE WORK

• Sweep for less than 30 minutes at one time.
• Avoid doing other tasks requiring similar movements, for example, vacuuming or mopping immediately before or after sweeping.
• Work at a steady rate rather than rushing.

USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

• Static mops are easier to use so dust and dirt is kept on the mop and the cloth can be thrown away. Most mops now come with a microstatic cloth that can be cleaned and reused.
• A long-handled pan and broom will reduce the need to bend.

DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Stand with legs apart and in a forward lunging position in the direction of the sweeping.
• Maintain natural curve of spine (‘S’ shape).
• Use a handle length appropriate to your height. Minimise the time spent cleaning under furniture.
• Clear the area of furniture and obstacles to be swept where possible.
• Avoid excessive bending and standing with your feet together.
PLAN AHEAD

• Store equipment in a convenient place to reduce unnecessary steps.

USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

• Use of advanced non-scrub products means you can spray the product on and there is no cleaning.
• Long-handled scrubbers can reduce the bending and twisting for you.
• Spray on cleaners need only a gentle wipe and do not create the extra resistance that cream cleansers can.

DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Spray the bath and tiles with a non-scrub cleaner after each use to reduce the amount of scum which builds up.
• Use long handled scrubbers or the mop on the floor of shower.
• Avoid awkward postures when cleaning.

REST

• Rest every 5–10 minutes.
• Pain or soreness is a likely indication that you have worked too hard or done the task incorrectly.
WASHING THE FLOOR

PLAN AHEAD
• Store equipment in a convenient place to reduce unnecessary steps.
• Wash one room only per day to conserve your energy.
• Only wash the areas of the house that need it. Does every room in the house need to have the floor washed?

BALANCE THE WORK
• Wash floors for less than 30 minutes at one time.
• Avoid doing other tasks requiring similar movements, e.g., vacuuming or sweeping immediately before or after mopping.
• Work at a steady rate rather than rushing.

USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT
• Use a mop with an adjustable handle length appropriate to your height.
• A microfibre mop with two cleaning mats is the lightest weight and easiest option, especially for tiles and polished floorboards. They can also be used without the need to carry a bucket around.
• Lightweight mops are better than the traditional cotton tops.
• A lightweight mop bucket with an in-built ringer is the better option if a bucket is to be used.
• A mop bucket can be placed on a mobile pot plant stand to wheel around the home.
DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

MOPPING WITHOUT A BUCKET USING A MICROFIBRE MOP

• Fill the laundry trough with a couple of inches of water and put in only the recommended amount of detergent.
• Soak one cleaning pad in the trough.
• Lightly wring the cleaning pad and attach to the mop.
• Soak second cleaning pad in the trough.
• Mop floor using a forward lunge position in the direction of the mopping.
• Start mopping in the corner furthest from your point of exit.
• Do not use ‘Figure 8’ method of mopping.
• When the cleaning pad needs rinsing, return to the trough and remove pad. Lightly wring out the second pad and attach to the mop. Soak first pad until needed.

MOPPING WITH A BUCKET

• Half fill the bucket as close to the area to be mopped as possible.
• Use recommended amount of floor cleaner in water.
• Remove the mop from the bucket in one easy movement using your thigh muscles. Legs should be in a forward lunge position in the direction of the mopping.
• Do not squeeze out the mop repeatedly. Let it soak in the bucket for up to five minutes to allow the dirt to disperse before wringing it out.
• Start mopping in the corner furthest from your exit.
• Do not use ‘Figure 8’ method of mopping.
• Do not hand wring mops.
USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

- It is easier to move a bed on castors to a convenient position.
- Very low beds could be raised to allow ease of changing linen.
- If the bed is not on castors then move it out from the wall permanently.
- When putting sheets away fold them in a way that will let them be unfolded across the bed so they will not need to be shaken.
- Air cell blankets and duvets are lighter than blankets.
DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Use your knee to move a bed on castors out from the wall.
• Position chairs at the end of the bed so blankets can be stripped off the bed by rolling onto the chair to reduce bending.
• Do not lift the mattress. It is better to kneel next to the bed and slide your forearm under the mattress to tuck in the sheet.
• Only tuck in sheets and blankets at the end of the bed.
• If tucking in sides, the preferred method is to kneel, tuck, stand, move to next section of mattress, kneel, tuck, stand and so on until completed.
• Use the bed as support when rising from kneeling.
USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

- A washing basket trolley reduces the need to bend and carry.
- Put the washing basket on a table or chair next to the machine if you do not have a trolley.
- A front loading machine and dryer can be raised to waist level to reduce the need for bending.
- Long-handled tongs can help you remove items from a top loading machine.
- A clothes dryer will reduce the need to hang out the washing.
- Purchase clothes that are machine washable and require little, if any ironing.
- An apron with a pocket in it is a good place to store pegs.
DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

- Place the basket on a bench, chair or trolley to load the washing from the machine.
- Remove items from the machine one at a time.
- Use the gentle cycle for items you would hand wash.
- Use a trolley to carry washing to the line.
- If a trolley is not possible carry small loads to the line.
- Wedge the door open before moving the basket through the door.
- Clothes can be hung on a clothes rack inside to minimise carrying.
- Adjust clothesline to suit height if possible.
- Place a small solid chair or table of reasonable height near the washing line to place the washing basket on if a trolley is not available.
- Clothes can be hung on coat hangers if pegs are difficult to use.
- Fold clothes as you remove them from the line to reduce the ironing.
PLAN AHEAD

- Store equipment in a convenient place to reduce unnecessary steps. (Council’s home maintenance service may be able to assist.)
- Only iron items that need it.

BALANCE THE WORK

- Iron for less than 30 minutes at any time.
- Avoid doing other tasks requiring similar movements immediately before or after ironing.
- Rest every 5–10 minutes.
USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

• Use an ironing board at the correct height. The ironing board should be adjusted so that your elbow is level with the top of the iron handle.
• Leave the ironing board set up all the time if possible.
• Purchase clothing that does not require ironing.

DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Do not iron on low benches or tables.
• Maintain good posture while ironing.
• When sitting use a high chair with a back support, a swivel seat is ideal.
• Place items to be ironed on a table or bench of similar height, close to the ironing board.
• Do not overfill the iron with water.
• Avoid excessive bending and awkward postures.
• Clothes are more easily ironed if they are damp.
• Remember, it is the heat from the iron that is effective rather than force from your arm, so let the iron do the work for you and don’t use undue pressure.
SHOPPING - PLAN AHEAD

• Make a list of all items required before you shop.
• Try to shop out of peak times so the time taken will be shorter.
• Shop in familiar stores to reduce the walking and time involved.
• Can the shopping be ordered via the telephone?

BALANCE THE WORK

• Shop regularly rather than doing one big shop, if possible.
• Shop at a steady rate rather than rushing.

USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

• Use a shopping trolley.
DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Do not lift heavy shopping bags. Have the supermarket staff place the items in a number of bags and use the shopping trolley to take to the car.
• Do not lift heavy items for example, pet food or potting mix. Ask the supermarket staff to organise a home delivery if possible.
• Park the car as close to home as possible to unload the shopping.
• Stand front-on to the car when loading/unloading the shopping, hold the items close to your body and bend your knees.
• Only carry small bags of groceries from the car and make several trips.
• Unload the shopping onto a table close to where items are to be stored.
• Stand front-on to cupboards when putting items away.
• Store shopping at a reachable height between the shoulder and the waist.
• Place heavier and glass items at waist height making them easily accessible.
• Place lighter or rarely used items either above/below waist height.
• Avoid awkward postures when loading and unloading or storing shopping.
USE THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

• Use a long-handled duster for high and low areas.
• Static cloths pick up more dust and reduce the need to wring out a cloth.

DO THE TASK THE RIGHT WAY

• Dust only areas that can be easily reached.
• Keep both feet on floor at all times.
• Do not bend over for more than 30 seconds at one time.
• After bending over, reverse the process using back extensions (standing up and bending gently backward).
• Use a folded towel or kneepads when kneeling.
• When rising from kneeling ensure there is something stable to use as support.
• It is preferable to kneel when dusting low rather than bending or squatting.
• Do not stand on furniture or ladders.
• Avoid excessive bending and stretching.
PLANNING AHEAD – HOME CARE PLAN

Use the following table to help you plan your week.

Work out a weekly routine by planning a balance of light and heavy duties spread throughout the week and note them down.
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