

## HOUSEWORK - Let's Get Practical



When you have fibromyalgia, concerns like a perfectly clean house may fall by the wayside, much to your horror and despair. The reality is that conserving your energy and minimising your pain becomes much more important than how you look, how clean your house is, and whether you're preparing elaborate meals. With fibromyalgia, you need to become more practical. That might mean readjusting your values, making changes in your routine, and breaking some old habits.

### Household Chores

For some people, doing routine household chores can become quite daunting in the face of fibromyalgia. And if you're accustomed to having a clean house, you may need to readjust your standards in order to cope with the rigours of managing your house.

Of course, the best answer to housework might be hiring outside help. But not everyone has the financial wherewithal to afford such a luxury. In the absence of outside help, you will need to adjust your housecleaning and standards to meet your health needs.

#### Break It Up

Do one heavy task each day instead of two or three in one day. Even better, break up a big task into several small ones, and spread them out over a few days. Rest frequently during longer or more strenuous tasks.

#### Minimize Clutter

Put everything back the instant you're done with it, and encourage family members to do the same. Toss out anything you no longer need or use. Eliminate junk mail by putting it in the recycling bin immediately.

#### Delegate

Even young children can help with household chores, like emptying wastepaper baskets or neatening hallways. Enlist your spouse or a friend to help with bigger chores.

#### Take Fewer Trips

Keep a basket near the stairs, and take up as much as you can easily carry at once instead of making several small trips.

#### Dress for Less Duress

On some days, the mere thought of getting dressed might be too painful to bear, much less the idea of washing, ironing, and hanging your clothes. When it comes to clothes, simplicity is the key. Avoid wearing clothes and shoes that are uncomfortable or too tight. Instead, choose loose, well-made clothes that are comfortable. To minimise clothing maintenance, do not buy garments that require hand washing, ironing, or dry cleaning.

#### Food Management

Preparing a meal might seem like a Herculean task to someone in the midst of a fibro flare. As much as you might enjoy eating a home-cooked meal, there will be days when you'll have to accept simpler dining, unless someone else can prepare it for you.

To help you get through the tough times, prepare meals and ingredients ahead of time when you're feeling well and store them in your freezer. In addition, consider using a slow cooker, which can save on the number of dishes you need to clean up.

You may need to rethink the way you shop for groceries, too. For instance, if you drive to several stores to take advantage of sales, you should consider the amount of time and energy you're expending simply to save a few dollars. In addition, you may need to purchase smaller items, which are not as heavy or bulky to carry.

On the worst days, consider ordering take-out or preparing canned or frozen foods, if you don't have someone to cook for you. Keep these kinds of foods handy in the event you have a bad day. As important as nutrition, such meals are occasionally necessary to help you get through a tough day.

### **A Safe House**

No one wants to suffer a fall, and for a person with fibromyalgia, a bad fall could be a trigger that sets off a flare. That's why keeping your house safe and free of hazards is also important to your day-to-day existence. Here are a few tips:

- Eliminate scatter rugs.
- Provide enough light.
- Maintain steps and stairs.
- Remove clutter.
- Wear safe shoes (with nonskid soles and low heels).

### **Assistive Devices**

Some people may need assistive devices to make their homes and lives more fibro-friendly. Assistive devices are just what the name implies — products that can help you do tasks more easily. They're also helpful for people who have arthritis or other conditions that restrict mobility