

# A Day in the Life



## of an Autoimmune Arthritis Patient

Created by the International Foundation for Autoimmune Arthritis



*Any way you look at it, chores are work that needs to get done on a regular basis. We all need clean clothes to wear & a living space that is relatively clean. However, when you have an Autoimmune Arthritis disease, those 'small routine tasks' can challenge expectations in manageability & efficiency. Be creative & you will see there can be a wide range of new possibilities & options to get the job done!*

# Chores

Created by the International Foundation for Autoimmune Arthritis

### For Supporters



### *It's such a chore...pardon the pun*

**There will be days when you simply cannot do chores.** You may not have the energy or the physical capability to complete the job. Use these tips to try to get through those tough days, or to attempt to prevent them from occurring as often!

**Here are some basic, general tips to get you headed in the right directions:**

- **Delegate** – Talk about what chores need to be done, discuss what you can manage, and decide how best to divide tasks. This could be internal dialogue (or self-delegating) or communicating with a family member or roommate. Perhaps you offer to do 3 things you are certain you can achieve in return for heavy lifting or pushing.
- **Hire Out** – Consider hiring people to do weekly maintenance or large jobs such as spring cleaning and yard work. Of course this isn't always feasible, but perhaps the neighborhood kids would be less expensive?

### *Laundry*

Write an intro



- **Plan Ahead** – List what needs to be done and try to plan for the most labor intensive when you have the most energy.
- **Prioritize** – Think about what needs to get done and what you would like to get done.
- **Take Rests** – Chores use up a lot of energy. Be kind to yourself and take some time to rest up and recharge.
- **Re-Modelling** – If you're considering renovations, think about accessibility – pull out drawers, dish racks that pull out etc.

## Wash or buy new?

We've all been there, right? Laundry is a chore that takes hours and depending on the load size(s) the carrying, folding, transferring of machines, putting away (I'm exhausted just thinking about it) can be **too much for one sitting**. If you can't break up your laundry into 2 days (washing and drying one day, folding and putting away the next) here are some other suggestions –straight from the patient.

- Have children help with their laundry by sorting, and carrying clothes to the washer.
- Drape clothes over a clothes horse instead of hanging them on a washing line
- Put wet clothes straight onto hangers, hang them on a clothes trolley – when they're dry, push the trolley to your room
- Use vents to dry out seasonal clothing like mitts, hats, and the insides of boots
- Consider investing in a folding table or use what's already available (e.g., grooming table, ironing board, bed)
- Put your laundry in a basket and kick it down the hall to your bedroom . Yes, we went there.
- Use your bed as a folding table
- Loop a bathrobe belt through the handle, tie it around your waist, and walk down the hall. (This works for more than laundry. Refrain from using this on people or pets, it's frowned upon ; ) ).
- Have someone else lift it
- Use an extra large bag or sack to carry laundry

## Other ideas...



- Use light weight and long handled tools (e.g., feather dusters, steam mops, dust pans, sweepers)
- Accessories to central vac systems where you can sweep dirt into a vent and it vacuums it up
- Small motorized vacuum cleaners that move around your house by themselves
- Start talking to other patients...they will give you the best tips possible. Just like right now!

***Autoimmune Arthritis may make it necessary for you to re-evaluate how you approach household chores. Try different ways, experiment with routine, and find out what works best for you.***

## Supporters

### **UNDERSTANDING AUTOIMMUNE ARTHRITIS**

Autoimmune Arthritis diseases are different in each patient, to a degree, although most will share the same symptoms, which include pain in joints, connective and soft tissues, muscle weakness, extreme fatigue/exhaustion, and low grade fevers. The degree of affect depends on several factors too, such as early diagnosis vs. late diagnosis, if they have a milder version that comes and goes (flares) every few months (not as common) OR if they have the chronic type that is always present and 'flaring' are times when its' worse.

For those who have the chronic versions, which is the majority, doing simple chores may be taxing at times, but the more involved chores, like laundry, can be downright impossible on certain days. This is due to the cellular nature of these diseases, where inflammation is caused when the cells fight with one another. The constant struggle inside the body is why patients must continually manage their physical tasks, attempting to secure enough energy to make it through the day.

If the patient starts with an Energy Bank of 20 coins, for example, and each physical task they do costs them a coin, laundry, unlike sweeping, would cost them several coins. One coin for sorting and loading baskets, one for carrying the baskets to the laundry room and loading the machines, one coin for transferring to the dryers, another for carrying the laundry to the folding location, a coin for folding and sorting, and finally a last coin for putting the laundry away. That's potentially SIX of the original 20 coins for the day can be spent just doing laundry! Finding ways to cut out steps could significantly help (such as having ones' own laundry room to lessen carrying) but it's still a major energy zapper. Some patients will balance their energy by doing the laundry up until putting it away, saving that for the following day, and trading that coin for adding sweeping or vacuuming to the mix.

The point is, these diseases are real, and often invisible, lending to lack of understanding. To help understand, think about a time when you were sick; your body worked hard to fight off the invader. The same is true with Autoimmune Arthritis. The difference is that these diseases are ongoing. Learning to manage time and tasks is key to managing the fatigue and pain the best way possible.