

Moving house when you have ME/CFS

Moving house is listed as one of the most stressful life events, alongside getting married and going through a divorce, so it's no surprise that the very idea of it can put your head in a spin. Add ME/CFS, or any chronic illness for that matter, into the mix and the general stress of moving is multiplied ten-fold.

Pacing is one of the most important aspects of living with ME/CFS and it particularly applies to moving house.

Not only are you dealing with your symptoms, which are challenging enough, but you now need to consider how you can make a house move manageable without exacerbating your fatigue, pain and other symptoms of ME/CFS. So, if you are moving house, here are a few suggestions that can help make the experience a little more manageable.

Consider your plan of attack

Make a plan and a time-schedule that works for you and stick to it. Pacing is vital, more so than on regular days, so start by looking out for yourself and tell everyone around you that this is what you're doing. Having a plan will help to reduce stress and hopefully make the process a little less overwhelming. If you have a tick list and time schedule you have more chance of keeping to a plan.

Write a checklist of all the things that need to be done before, during and after the move. This will help to make sure nothing is forgotten. Brain fog can cause confusion and a lack of focus and clarity, so lists are pretty essential.

Do it in your own time

Once you have your checklist, consider how long it would take you to organise everything, then add plenty of contingency time for rests



and breaks. You certainly don't need a crash once the wheels of the removal lorry are rolling. Scale back your activity well before moving day and focus on conscious rest and self-care. You may well feel frustrated or disappointed, but it will be better if you allow yourself compassion and forgiveness for not being able to be as physically active as you had hoped to be.

- Start any decluttering, sorting and packing well ahead of when you need to. Do what you can when you can and start by sorting, disposing, and packing things you don't need until after the move. If you don't love it or have use for it, dump it. Pack methodically and keep just what you need around you until the move.
- Do anything you can from your bed or from the sofa. Make a list of when those things need doing and do them on alternate days so you're not getting so physically tired.
- Listen to what your body is telling you and rest regularly. You know how long you can keep going without getting overwhelmed, so stop before it gets to that stage.
- Be flexible. Don't expect your plan to run smoothly. If you suddenly get a lot of pain or fatigue simply change the plan.
- Set achievable goals to help retain your energy levels. Avoid the big tasks - get help for those.

Recruit friends and family

Remember to ask your family and friends to help you. Set them specific tasks and accept any help that's offered. It will help to take some of the strain away. As well as giving practical help with the packing and moving, they can also give you the time and space to relax, rest and even manage social time which will be beneficial emotionally.



Professional movers

Don't underestimate the power of the removal man. If you can afford to do so, hire professional movers. They know what they are doing and can mean the difference between having a stressful, exhausting move that may cause a flare-up and leave you struggling with your health even more than usual.

Expert movers will do your packing for you, move everything to your new home on the appointed day, delivery the boxes to the correct rooms and even unpack the lot. They know how to get large items of furniture through doors that seem too small and they know how to take things apart and reassemble them at the destination.

If you cannot run to the cost of professional movers, purchase proper packing boxes online, along with tissue, bubble wrap, etc. Professional movers will provide all this, so make sure you add up all the costs to determine which is the actually the better option in the long run.

Likewise, if it's affordable, hire professional cleaners to clean your old and new properties to save you the anguish of trying to leave your property clean and tidy as well as having somewhere pristine to move into.

Try to get any decorating done before you move in to save the upheaval of moving furniture around when you're living there.

Survival Kit for moving day

Have a box labelled 'On the day' and put everything you need for that day in it. It is vital to keep your medical documents, medication and medical equipment with you to ensure they don't get lost in the move.

Also pack tea, coffee, milk, sugar, a kettle, some snacks and sandwiches to keep you going through

the day. Plan to get a takeaway or have a pre-prepared meal ready for the evening of the move so you don't need to think about what you're eating. Don't forget about a few household items too, such as mugs, plates and cutlery, as well as an extra jumper, change of clothes, toiletries - and loo rolls!

Physically, there may be other things you rely on during a normal day - a favourite blanket, cushions, slippers and comfy clothes, headphones, etc.

Make sure the last items to be loaded into the lorry, and the first items out, are the sofa and the bed. This means that whatever is going on, you will have what you need to be comfortable whilst it's all happening. You could ask a family member or a friend to cook for you. Better still, let someone else deal with it all on the day and decamp to family or friends until it's all over.

Checklist:

Six weeks before the move:

- Confirm moving date
- Notify landlord if you're renting
- Check home insurance
- Get quotes from removal firms
- Book pets into kennels or with family/friends
- Start to declutter
- Order new furniture or carpets for new house
- Order boxes and packing cases
- Organise phone redirection

Two weeks before the move:

- Start on the packing, if you haven't already
- Inform your GP of your new address
- Notify all your utility providers
- Arrange for your post to be redirected
- Cancel or rearrange any regular deliveries
- Send out moving cards
- Finalise removal plans
- Arrange key drop off and collection
- Inform the bank, in writing
- Tell the council
- Tell your home insurance provider
- Start running down the freezer