A Practical Guide for Everyday Living with essential Tremor
Practical Suggestions

All people need to incorporate a healthy lifestyle of good nutrition, sleep and exercise into their daily lives. This is especially true for people with ET. Good habits help to reduce stress and stress reduction helps to control tremor.

The purpose of all coping tips is to help those with ET improve the quality of life by providing information that will help them reduce the stress related to activities of daily living.

General suggestions:

• Teach yourself to use your non-dominant hand for as many activities as possible, including writing
• Hold your chin toward your chest, or turn your head to the side to control head tremor. Chewing gum has helped with head tremor.
• Use your non-dominant hand to steady your dominant hand, and whenever possible use 2 hands instead of one, especially when handling liquids.
• Use travel mugs with tight-fitting lids. Carry one with you, keep one in your car, and give one to each of your friends so they’ll have them when you visit.
• Use straws and carry them with you. You can find sturdy, thick-plastic straws in many house ware sections of stores if thin plastic straws are too flimsy.
• Avoid caffeine and other over the counter medications and herbs that contain ingredients that could increase your heart rate thereby increasing tremor. Besides caffeine, other ingredients to avoid include mahaung and ephedra
• Use a tray to carry items, especially liquids. When you must carry something containing a liquid without a tray, try turning your arms and wrists for greater stability.
• Wear wrist weights and/or keep your elbows close to your body when performing tasks to help control hand tremor.
• Carry and use larger handled, weighted pens and eating utensils with you
• Use a signature stamps for things that require a signature
• Carry a strip of self-adhesive address labels to use when people ask for your name and address.
Eating, Drinking, Food Preparation

- Place your thumb along the rim of a mug or small glass and place the fingers across the bottom to provide more stability when drinking
- Pick up cups and mugs from above (if not hot), placing all five fingers around it below the rim
- Fill cups, mugs and glasses half-full
- Use heavy glasses and mugs instead of cups. Soup cups are often a good choice too.
- Use dishes that have vertical sides
- Get a rubberized placemat that sticks to the table so plates do not slide or buy a plate bumper guard from a medical supply store. The bumper guard clips onto the dinner plate so there is leverage to get food onto your spoon or fork.
- Eat English or European style by turning your fork upside down and moving it to your non-dominant hand
- Put your microwave onto a dining table so the containers of food can be placed in and out of the microwave easily.

Personal Care

- Use an electric razor when shaving, because it allows movement in all directions and helps prevent nicks caused by shaking
- Use a rotary razor that fits your hand. Shave down with a straight stroke and then up over the same area to help reduce shaking
- Find an inexpensive manicurist instead of trying to care for and polish your nails yourself.
- Find a cosmetologist you trust to wax or pluck your eyebrows.
- Twist dental floss around two fingers on both hands for better control. Disposable floss holders are also easy to manage.
- Use an electric toothbrush or a child’s toothbrush for better control
- Applying makeup and putting on Jewelry
  - Apply mascara by resting your elbows on the countertop. Put the wand in one hand and use the other hand to keep the wand steady
  - Apply eyebrow pencil, mascara, eyeliner or lipstick by resting your finger or the palm of your hand on your face to steady your hand.
  - Put on earrings by resting your elbows on a table and placing your chin on an up-ended facial tissue box
Writing

- Print rather than write script and use down strokes rather than up strokes
- Change your signature so you can sign your names in a couple of strokes
- Write in small letters—it is easier than writing in large letters
- Rest your forearm on a table while writing
- Hold the pen between your index and middle finger
- Try a Dr. Grip pen or PhD by Sanford pen
- Place writing paper on a soft surface such as a newspaper to help control shaking hand movements
- Sit at a desk/table and hold a clipboard (or similar device) at an angle. Balance the clipboard against the edge of the desk and against your legs. A clipboard can also be balanced on crossed legs
- Place paper on a rubberized placemat that sticks to the desk or table. Not only will the paper stay in place. But also you'll be able to press harder.
- Use pre-printed, personalized stationery
- Sign checks, and fill out deposit and withdrawal slips at home before going to the bank.
- Use automatic payments and deposits instead of writing checks and filling out deposit forms.
- Write all your checks on the same day
- Use computer software to write checks
- Use credit cards or debit cards instead of writing checks

Work/Life suggestions

Telephone and security alarm tasks

- Purchase a telephone with large buttons. Avoid phones with speed dial and redial buttons to close to the number buttons. Phones that have numbers in the handset allow you to brace one hand against the other
- Be “hands free”. Use a speaker phone or a headset when talking
- Keep small tape recorder next to the phone so messages can be recorded.
- Ask your security alarm representative to give you a remote to turn your system on and off
Using a Computer

- Use a computer whenever you can and position the keyboard comfortably
- Anchor your palms against the front of the keyboard and let your fingers do the walking
- Set your computer to omit double strikes on the keyboard and double-clicks on the mouse
- Consider a wave keyboard, the keys are further apart and there is a touchpad on the keyboard to use rather than a mouse
- Attach a wrist rest that allows you to slide your hands as you type so you don’t have to lift them
- Try using a Turbo Mouse or optical mouse that uses a pad instead of a ball
- Use a computer mouse adapter like Montrose Secam that filters out shaking movement of the hand
- Talk to computer stores about speech-recognition software. Some programs are helpful while not being too costly

Exercise and Stress Reduction

Exercise

Exercise is good for almost everyone in varying degrees. We recommend that you and your physician develop an exercise plan. For some individuals with tremor, exercise causes a temporary increase in tremor, while others exercise has a calming effect.

Golf Tips

- Try a soft rubber golf tee that has a round base and a tubular stem that supports the ball.
- TWIST your forearms and wrists to give greater stability when you play golf. Grip the putter between your thumbs and forefingers, which will TWIST your forearms inward, then concentrate on your shoulder turn.
- To tee up a golf ball, first place the tee in the ground. Stand up straight. Bend down again and place the ball on the tee.
Stress busters

- Consider meditation, massage, breathing exercises or acupuncture to reduce stress.
- If you have head tremor, wear a foam neck collar during stressful times.
- For hand tremor, form a water-based bag of gel into a collar. Cool it in the freezer for comfort during the summer.
- Ask your neurologist to recommend a psychologist who specializes in biofeedback.
- Count slowly to 10 to relax yourself before beginning a task.
- Read in bed by holding the paper or magazine in the hand with the tremor, and put a finger of your other hand about halfway between the elbow and wrist of the hand holding the paper or magazine. OR Prop the reading material on a pillow lying on your stomach.
- Take up photography. Several companies make digital cameras with Image Stabilization technology that will allow someone with hand tremor to take a picture that is in focus. To further stabilize your hand when shooting a photo, wear wrist weights.
- Care for a pet and the pet will care for you. Studies have shown that pets help calm anxiety, and prove companionship.