

## 3 ways to save time with those tedious, personal tasks

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As a resident physician working long shifts and running short on free time, accomplishing the everyday tasks can seem to require extraordinary efforts. Add on top of that the layers of pandemic exhaustion that all doctors—especially residents—are feeling, and cooking and cleaning can feel like climbing Mount Everest.

Follow these three essential bits of advice for residents so that you can focus more of your mental energy on thriving in residency.

### **Forget about grocery carts**

It is not uncommon for grocery stores to be open late—with some open all the time. So for those night owls, stopping in for a quick shop in a relatively uncrowded supermarket is an option. There's also a number of delivery services that can help ease the burden of this chore.

“I minimize all of my homework as much as possible,” said Taylor DesRosiers, MD, formerly an emergency medicine resident at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Virginia. “I have a vegetable delivery service that comes once a week. They deliver fresh vegetables to my door. I have a cleaning lady who comes once a week. It's one of the best investments I've ever made. To be able to come home to a clean house where everything is in order it is such a great way to come back from a long shift.

“In my mind it's all about task-offloading with anything you can. Whether it's a meal delivery service, or a dog-walker,” said Dr. DesRosiers, now working as a critical care fellow at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. “They all cost money, and I know money is tight in residency but some things are worth it.”

## Leave the laundromat behind

Even if you are wearing scrubs most days, laundry can pile up. Sending your laundry out to get it done by a service is the most time-effective, least cost-effective measure. Conversely, getting laundry done at a laundry mat is the thriftiest, most time-consuming measure. The happy medium may be renting or owning a place with laundry in unit.

The cost of in-unit laundry machines can be high. Depending on the city, some estimates say it could mean shelling out at least an extra \$100 for rent every month. During residency, Tani Malhotra, MD, found the cost to be worth it.

“I can just throw my laundry in any time and then I’ll throw my clothes in the dryer and I don’t have to worry about them,” Dr. Malhotra said when she was finishing up her stint as a chief resident in the ob-gyn program at York Hospital in central Pennsylvania.

“Before I came here for residency, the community laundry thing is what I had done before,” said Dr. Malhotra, now a maternal fetal medicine fellow at Case Western Reserve University who also serves as member-at-large on the AMA International Medical Graduates Section Governing Council.

Before moving back to Cleveland, Dr. Malhotra said, “That was one of my required criteria for housing: There has to be in-unit laundry. It’s non-negotiable.”

## Make one meal into two

Preparing meals at home is often going to be healthier and cheaper. Still, the time and energy it takes to shop, then cook, then do dishes can be overwhelming.

“It’s one of those things where I’m choosing food or sleep or laundry—you just have to prioritize sometimes,” said Stephanie Lee, MD, who completed her preventive medicine residency training at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine. She’s now assistant professor of pediatrics at the Penn State Health St. Joseph Downtown Pediatrics Clinic.

“I didn’t get into cooking until recently,” Dr. Lee said. Earlier in her residency career, she said, “I ate out a lot. That was kind of hard money-wise.”

“If I’m eating out, I would try to eat half of what I had and I would take the other half home, but then I didn’t have a dishwasher, so my dishes would just pile up for sometimes a week,” she said. “Luckily, my fiancée loves doing dishes.”