

Pacing

The aim of energy management is to pace your exercise and daily activity in line with your pain levels and general physical functioning to become more active, fitter and healthier. Some increases in pain in the muscles used are to be expected.

Ideally use a timer, and be disciplined in beginning and stopping activities with your baseline.

Step 1

Set a goal that is connected to physical activity and preferably something you want to do, eg walk the dog

Break down the goal into small steps eg walking to the end of the street, then around the block

Step 2

Set a baseline – start at a level you can comfortably manage. If the goal is a 30 minute walk and you struggle to walk for 15 minutes but can comfortably manage 8 minute walks.

Try an activity on 2 consecutive days. Record your response on the two days and use the average.

For Example:

Day 1 -11 minute walk, Day 2 - 9 minute walk

Average: $11 + 9 = 20$. $20/2 = 10$ minutes

Then reduce by 20%, 10 minutes $\times .2 = 2$ min

Baseline is 10 min – 2 = 8 min walk (80% of capacity), increase by 10% every 4-7 days

To improve pacing, you need to undertake a little more each week.

How much is safe for you?

Consider your body first, by very gradually building up physical activity over time. Your activity goal may be reached at a slower speed than you would like but the important point is to set realistic goals and to pace yourself so that these realistic goals can be met.

Use a diary to record your progress so you can pace accordingly and you can measure achievements

Increase by 10% every 4-7 days. Small graded increases will help you avoid the overuse-abuse, 'Boom-Bust' pattern coming from doing too much, too soon.

Be patient

Reward yourself when incremental gains are made i.e. do something nice at the end of the day

- Be consistent
- Be persistent
- Be patient with yourself

Tips for Pacing

Add in rest periods

Perform the activity over a realistic timeframe

Gradually make the activity harder e.g. walk uphill

After some time you might consider walking on less stable surfaces e.g. on the beach

Vary the activity by changing the environment or position e.g. water walking or wall slide against a tree

Pace the activities, even on bad days.

Doing too much on the good days sets you up for 3-4 bad days.

Keep to the time limit

NB. Contact your pain specialist if you have any questions about your exercise program or suitability of a specific exercise.