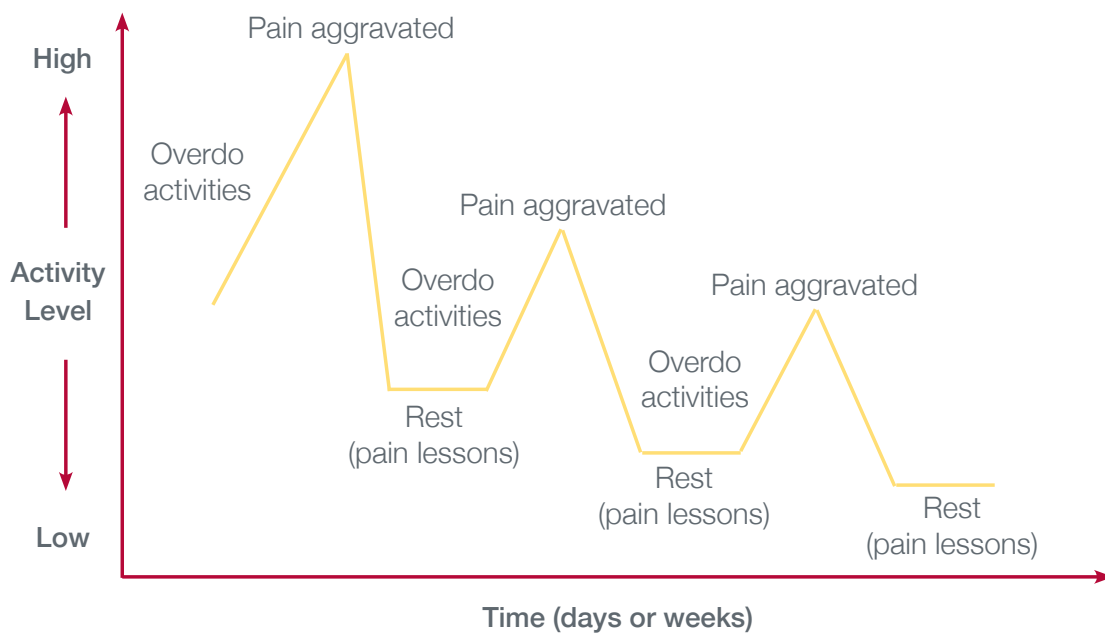


Principles of Pacing

Pacing can assist with regaining function and maintaining an even level of activity throughout our daily lives. We use pacing techniques to avoid falling into the rollercoaster activity cycle or boom and bust pattern. Boom and bust patterns lead to weakening of the body and a reduced tolerance for everyday activities. Pacing aims to strengthen and rehabilitate the body through activity.



Plan and prioritise

Diaries and calendars are a useful and cost-effective way to create a balance of activities both at home and at work. Use a diary to prioritise your days and plan your week - review it daily.

- › Heavy and light tasks should be alternated with rest breaks included.
- › If something important needs to be done, reschedule some of the non-urgent tasks for the following week(s).
- › Write yourself a list of activities or tasks that need to be completed, and then divide them into daily, weekly and monthly/occasional tasks.
- › A diary can assist in identifying any activity that may be increasing your pain. You can then target this activity to try and make it easier for yourself.
- › Review your diary at the end of the week to see what you have achieved. Diaries are useful to help with motivation when goal setting.
- › Meal planning is a great first step when starting a new diary.

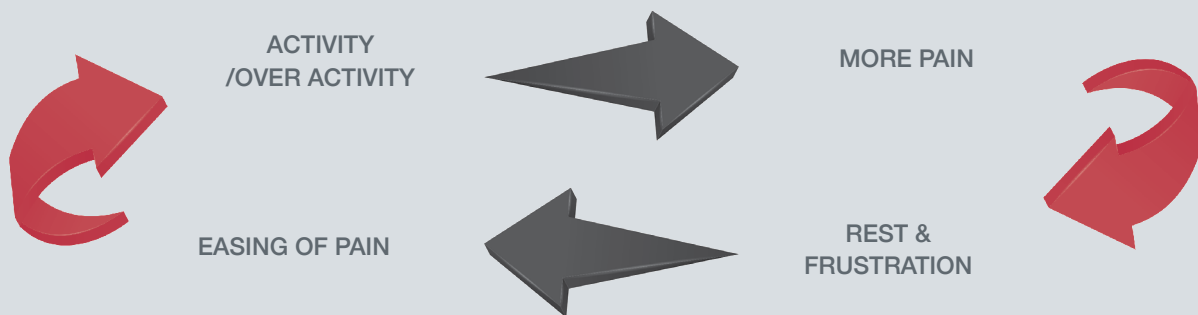
Do little, often

Break down tasks into smaller, manageable components:

- › do shorter, more frequent trips to the grocery store rather than one big shop
- › clean one room at a time or break cleaning down into jobs (wipe all benches; break, dusting; break, vacuum floors etc.)
- › hang out half the load of washing then come back to the machine to collect the second half.

If you break down difficult tasks and plan to do a little each day, you will have enough energy to do activities you enjoy. It may seem time consuming initially, but it is an efficient way to complete tasks.

Remember: overdoing it can restart the pain cycle!



Take regular, planned rest/relaxation breaks

Rest breaks can include light activities such as opening the mail, making phone calls, paying bills, completing a crossword, and mindfulness or meditation techniques.

- › This does not mean lying down or having a sleep when your pain increases.
- › Plan frequent short rest breaks into your daily schedule; a timer can prompt you to take your break.
- › This will assist with completing the day's requirements without your pain becoming unmanageable.

Alternate your posture regularly

- › Try to maintain good posture during all activities.
- › Complete stretch breaks or move around regularly to prevent an increase in pain.
- › If you are unable to sit at a computer for longer than 10 minutes, schedule stretch breaks or get up and walk around.
- › Change your posture regularly to not overload an area
- › Use manual handling techniques at all times and be aware of how you are sitting, standing, reaching and lifting.
- › Position tasks directly in front of you to minimise twisting.
- › Organise areas both at home and at work so that supplies for commonly used activities are easily accessible. As shown in the diagram, frequently used supplies should be between shoulder and waist height.
- › Store articles according to their function (e.g. all crockery together, gardening tools in the shed).
- › Organise set storage places for items to avoid unnecessarily searching.
- › Use clear containers or labels to identify what is in each container.



Gradually increase activity level through goal setting

Using baselines and setting goals helps to gradually increase activity over time and recondition or strengthen the body. Baseline and goal setting can be applied to all occupations at home, work and with exercise.

Starting out, it may seem that you are going backwards as you will be doing less than you did before. However, using these techniques you can gradually increase your level of activity without increasing your pain.

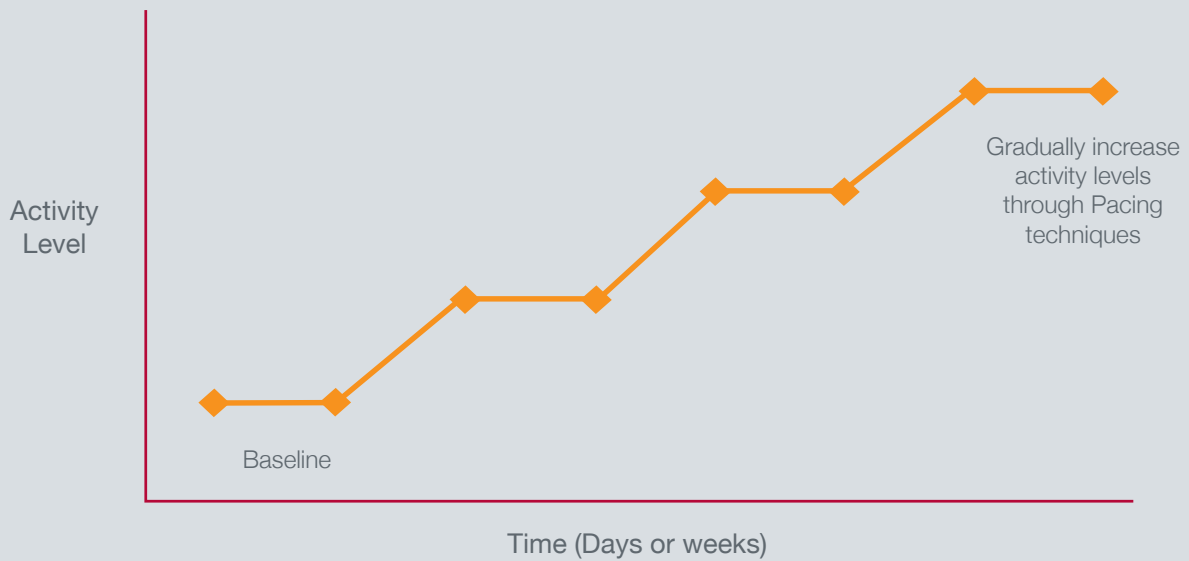
Setting goals:

- › Work out what can currently be managed. Time the activity on three different days and take the average: e.g. 11 mins + 9 mins + 10 mins = 30 mins 30 mins divided by 3 = 10 mins.
- › Work out the baseline from that average (10 mins). It is recommended to start 20% below the average (8 mins). Stop the activity once this time has ended regardless of how you are feeling.
- › Decide on a realistic build up rate and aim to gradually increase your activity over time e.g. 8 mins x 3 sessions, 9 mins x 3 sessions, 10 mins x 4 sessions.
- › Write down your goal to record the progress (e.g. by Friday I will complete the activity for 9 minutes). This goal can guide your activities throughout the day and week.

If you achieve your daily targets, continue to gradually increase them. If you find yourself having difficulty, reduce your targets until they are manageable. It is a slow process that requires daily practice, but if you stick to your targets, your long-term goal will eventually be achieved.



Ideal form of pacing



The aim of pacing is to increase your activity level overtime without increasing your pain. Use your function or activities as a form of rehabilitation.

Try to break the cycle of good and bad days and aim for an even level of activity throughout the day and week. Overtime the amount of activity that can be completed should increase with the use of pacing principles.

If pacing is something you would like to try, aim to make small changes initially. Trial pacing with one activity and build from there.



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