

Pacing



Patient information leaflet

Pacing is a strategy to balance rest and activity in a measured way to help you cope more effectively with your pain or fatigue.

If you need clarification or advice on any aspect of this treatment, please contact your therapist:

Fiona Tunbridge

or

Lucy Lyon

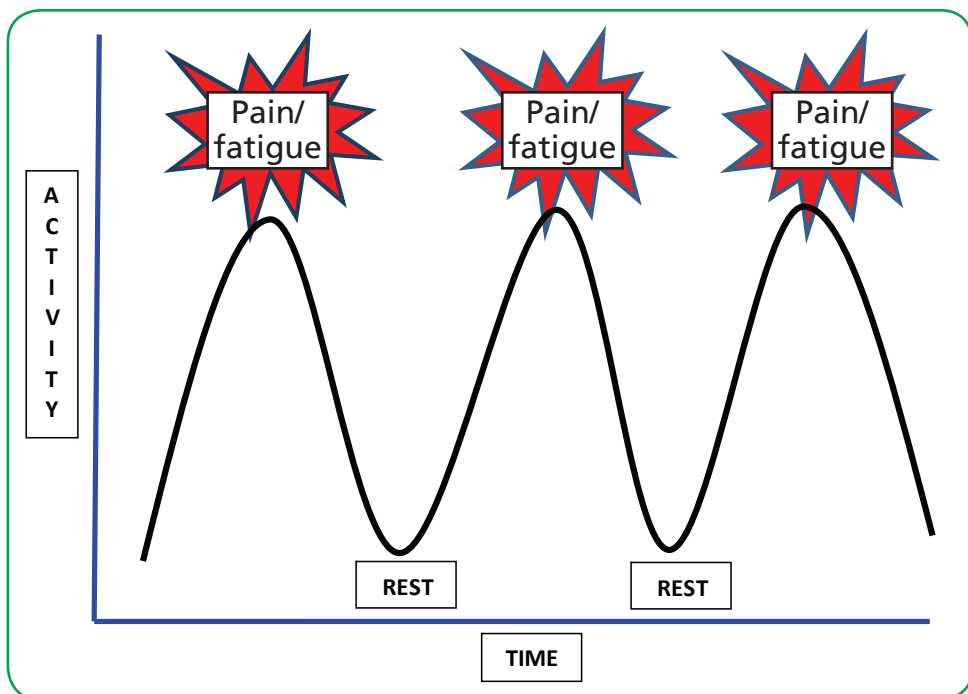
Tel: 01509 564 318

Occupational Therapy

Good days and bad days

People with persistent pain or fatigue often find that they experience fluctuations in their symptoms, perhaps for no obvious reason. Sometimes these “ups and downs” in pain or fatigue can be linked to activity levels.

A common problem is that some people try to do more when their pain or fatigue feels more tolerable, often trying to “catch up” and subsequently overdoing it. Most people recognise that if they do this, their symptoms are made worse in the following hours or days. The result is that they are forced to do less, and their mood becomes lowered or more irritable. We call this the ‘over-activity / under-activity cycle’ as shown below.



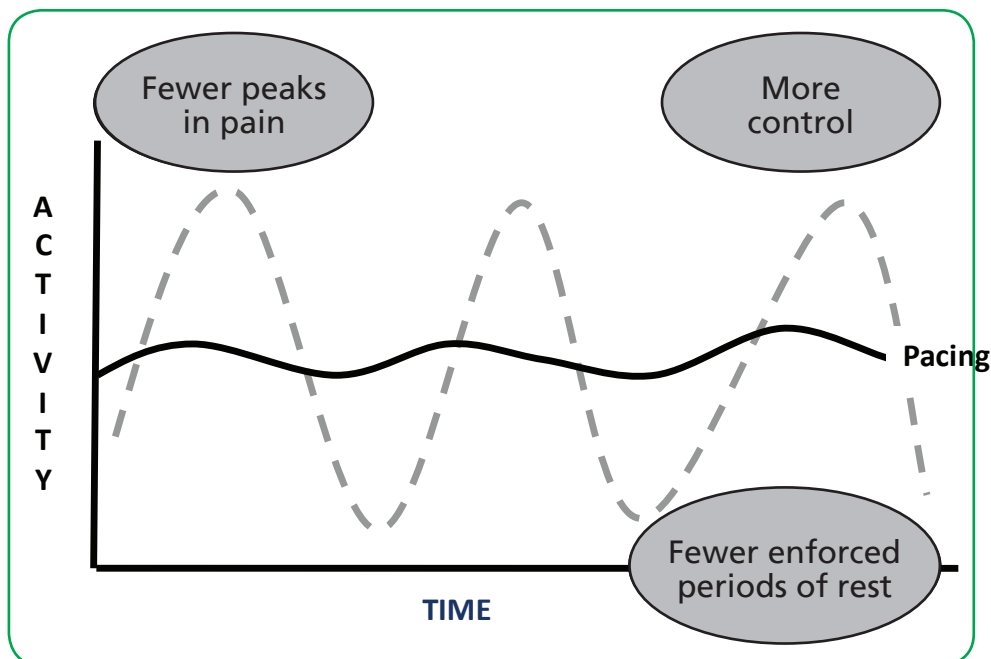
What is the alternative?

Pacing is a key strategy to break the over-activity/under-activity cycle.

Pacing is not a cure for your condition, but rather it aims to help you cope more effectively with your pain or fatigue. It does this by reducing the peaks and troughs in your activity levels. Hopefully this will help put you back in control of your activities and allow you to cope better with your pain or fatigue. This should also reduce some of the exhaustion and frustration you may experience.

“Pacing is balancing rest and activity in a measured way”

The diagram below shows the change that pacing can have:



Some people identify that they already pace themselves or their activities, because they break up their activities and take rests. For example:

“I stopped cleaning because I felt bad and couldn’t do any more.”

“I walked for 30 minutes before I took a rest, despite knowing that I would pay for it later.”

However, as shown on the previous page, this can still cause the over-activity/under-activity cycle. More effective pacing is not based on how much activity you can do or on how you feel - or on how much energy you think you have. Instead it involves deciding and planning the amount of activity that you can manage before you begin to experience symptoms of pain or fatigue, and sticking to it on a regular basis.

Practical pointers to pacing activity

Break the activity down into smaller and more manageable ‘parts’. Spread the demanding ‘parts’ out over the day/week, rather than completing them in one go.

Plan in advance a set time when you will stop or break from an activity, rather than stopping at differing times based on how you feel. Set the time to stop when the activity is still manageable.

On stopping an activity or task - either:

- Take a rest break
- Incorporate a change of posture
- Change or alternate the activity

Some examples of pacing

- Iron five items at a time, make a phone call, do five more items etc.
- Mow the front lawn, read some of the paper, and mow the back lawn.
- Hoover one room a day instead of doing them all in one go.
- Plan rest breaks at set intervals on a long drive.
- Wash up the dishes, leave them to drip dry while you have a cup of tea, and put them away later.
- Sit down on a bench for five minutes halfway round your dog walking route.
- Prepare vegetables whilst standing. After ten minutes change your posture to continue the task sitting down (set kitchen timer to prompt you). Continue posture changes every ten minutes.

Remember that the amount of activity in the examples above will differ according to the person.

And finally....

The reason that we choose to do activities is complex. It is not just based on how physically able we are, but may also involve our level of motivation, our routines and habits and what we or others expect from us. It could also be influenced by the responsibilities that we have in our families, friendships and work or financial commitments.

This means that learning how to pace does not occur overnight and may feel like a challenging process. What many people have told us is that pacing requires time, effort and careful communication, but has improved their quality of life.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
am	am	am	am	am	am	am
pm	pm	pm	pm	pm	pm	pm
eve	eve	eve	eve	eve	eve	eve

Activity/posture	When do I need to stop?

**If you need this information in another language
or format please telephone 0116 295 0994 or
email: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk**

Arabic

إذا كنت في حاجة إلى قراءة هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتنسيق مختلف، يرجى الاتصال بهاتف رقم 0116 295 0994 أو إرسال بريد إلكتروني إلى: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Bengali

যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে আপনার দরকার হয় তাহলে দয়া করে 0116 295 0994 নম্বরে ফোন করুন বা Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করুন।

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要將本資訊翻譯為其他語言或用其他格式顯示，請致電 0116 295 0994 或發電子郵件至：Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Gujarati

જો તમારે આ માહિતી અન્ય ભાષા અથવા ફોર્મેટમાં જોઈતી હોય તો 0116 295 0994 પર ટેલિફોન કરો અથવા Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk પર ઇમેઇલ કરો.

Hindi

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Polish

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Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਜਾਂ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0116 295 0994 ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਇੱਥੇ ਈਮੇਲ ਕਰੋ: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Somali

Haddii aad rabto in aad warbixintan ku hesho luqad ama nuskhad kale fadlan soo wac lambarka 0116 295 0994 ama email u dir: Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk

Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان یا صورت میں درکار ہوں تو براہ کرم اس ٹیلی فون نمبر 0116 295 0994 یا ای میل پر رابطہ کریں Patient.Information@leicspart.nhs.uk