

Pacing

Patient Information Leaflet

MSK Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy Service



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What is pacing?

Pacing is a way of managing your activity so that you can stay active, **without making your pain worse**. It means finding an amount of activity that you can do comfortably, and **then slowly increasing it over time**.

Many people with pain fall into a common pattern of doing too much on one day, which can cause more pain, then needing several days to recover.

This is often called a '**boom and bust cycle**'.

Pacing helps you avoid this cycle.

Why does pacing matter?

When you have pain, your tissues and nervous system can become more sensitive. If you suddenly do a lot more activity, your pain may increase. People often call this a **flare-up**.

Keeping your activity levels steady and consistent gives your body a better chance to adapt and build tolerance.

Common Mistakes

Doing too much on 'good days'

If you wake with less pain, it is easy to try and do everything at once. This often leads to more pain the next day.

Resting completely on 'bad days'

Many people stop all activity when pain increases because they worry about causing damage. However, **pain does not always mean harm**. Staying gently active is usually helpful.

Increasing activity too quickly

It's tempting to make big jumps in activity when you feel motivated. However, slow, steady progress works better and is more likely to last.

What do you recommend?

Start with an amount of activity you can manage **most days of the week**. Then increase it **gradually**, using small steps rather than big leaps.

Example: if walking for 20 minutes causes a flare-up, try starting with 10 minutes instead. Do this regularly and then slowly build up as your body adapts.

If you need help to understand this leaflet or would like it in a different language or format such as large print, Braille or audio, please ask a member of staff.



MSK Physiotherapy Service

Find out more about the MSK Physiotherapy Service and what we offer

www.leicspart.nhs.uk/service/musculoskeletal-msk-therapy-physiotherapy/



Further Resources

Access our other MSK Physiotherapy resources www.leicspart.nhs.uk/msk-physiotherapy-resources-getting-started/

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