

# Advice for people with persistent pain

## The 'Resting and Rushing' Cycle

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Many people find they have good and bad phases with their pain.

When you have a bad phase with your pain you may do very little for a few days. This means that over time you can become less fit, which can lead to problems. You may not be fit enough to cope with the things you do during a good phase. This can increase your pain again, which forces you to rest, and leads to a vicious cycle.

When you have a good phase, you may then be tempted to rush around. You may want to do all the things you could not do when you went through your bad phase.

This cycle of 'resting and rushing' can lead to a gradual loss of strength and fitness, and increasing pain. It can also make you feel low.

### The problems that can result from this cycle are:

- More pain
- Less fitness
- Less success
- Less confidence
- More stress.

### The way back to a fuller life

Many people with chronic pain can lead a fuller life if they begin **PACING** their life. You can pace any activity.

- Decide on a level you can comfortably do, even on a bad day. This is your baseline.
- Do this level every day.
- Then plan how much more you can do without causing problems. Try about 20% extra a week.
- Don't suddenly do a lot extra as this will often start the vicious cycle again.

Here is an example of how to pace your walking:

- Your baseline might be 5 minutes. Walk for this time every day.
- After a week, increase this to 6 minutes. The next week do 7 minutes and so on.
- Keep increasing like this until you reach your goal.

## Goal Setting

You may have had to give up things because of your pain. A goal is something you want to achieve. You need to be realistic when setting your goals.

### Let's use the example of walking again.

If you started at 5 minutes, your goal might be to walk 20 minutes. This might allow you to go to the shops, walk the dog, or walk to your friend's/family's home.

Key points for pacing and achieving your goal.

- Find your baseline
- Decide on your goal
- Be realistic
- Gradually increase your activity
- Plan your increases
- Be consistent, even on the bad days.

**Exercise** has been shown to be very important.

- It strengthens weak muscle. This gives support to your joints.
- It gives you more movement.
- It improves your balance.
- It improves fitness.
- It can also make you feel good.

Remember you need to **PACE** any exercise programme you start. This means doing activity little and often, which helps smooth out the highs and lows. Record what you are doing and gradually increase it. Don't worry if you are achy at first. This is normal as you are working your muscles harder than before. This should get easier.

**Relaxation** can help you become aware of tension and control it. Tension can lead to more pain and restrict normal movement. Stress, feelings of irritation and anxiety can increase the amount of pain you feel. Books and tapes on relaxation are in most libraries. The best relaxation method is one that suits you.

## Results of your efforts

- Less pain
- More fitness
- More success
- More confidence
- Less stress.

## Further Information

Helpful links for further information on pain and other specific information websites/apps:

### Understanding Pain in less than 5 minutes, and what to do about it!

Short Australian video, from the *Live Active Clinic* which explains persistent pain:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_3phB93rvI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_3phB93rvI)



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### Ten Footsteps to Living Well with Pain

*Ten Footsteps to Living Well with Pain* is a step-by-step online guide to living well despite your persistent pain.

<https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/ten-footsteps-programme/>



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This leaflet should **only** be used by specific individuals following physiotherapy assessment. If you have any concerns, please ask your physiotherapist.

This leaflet was compiled by the East Lothian Physiotherapy Department in association with the Patient Information Leaflet Group, NHS Lothian Physiotherapy Services.

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### It's OK to Ask

When you understand what's going on with your health, you can make better decisions around your care and treatment.

[www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/its-ok-to-ask/](http://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/its-ok-to-ask/)



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