

Pacing Reminders:

- Pacing involves scheduling your daily activities.
- Almost every activity can be broken up into smaller steps.
- Learn to do chunks of “manageable activity”, that is activity that you can do without increasing your pain.
- Stop the activity before your pain increases or you become fatigued.
- Be aware of how long you are performing a certain activity; use a timer to schedule your break times.
- Let others be aware of your plan.

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Chronic Pain and Activity Planning (Pacing)

Chronic Pain and Pacing

Many people who experience chronic pain limit activities because their pain increases. Pain can affect work activities, social activities with family and friends, as well as general daily activities, such as self-care tasks.

Unfortunately, this can lead to frustration, social isolation, and reduced muscle strength.

Pacing is a technique that can help you better manage activities while controlling your pain.

What is pacing?

Pacing is participating in an activity according to a time schedule that side-steps pain flare-up, rather than a schedule that is controlled by pain.



The most important aspect of pacing is knowing how much activity is doable for you.

Be Proactive

In order to pace out activities, you must first learn how long you can spend at an activity before you begin to get uncomfortable, the pain flares-up, or you get tired.

It is helpful to initially use a clock/watch or a timer to determine your manageable level for scheduling activities and breaks.

A break can be doing a different activity, changing your position, or resting.

Through trial and error, you will learn how much activity you can do before the pain starts to become uncomfortable, or you start to fatigue.

Include Others

If you plan to do activities with others, discuss your plan with them beforehand.

Explain to them that the activity may take a little longer because of your schedule. However, by following your schedule, you will be able to participate in the activity, and prevent your pain from increasing.

How to Pace

Break activity up into smaller units. Almost every activity can be broken up into smaller, manageable amounts. For example, instead of doing all the dishes at once, which could increase your pain, break the task into 5 minute intervals, and do something else (in another position) in between these intervals. It may take a little longer, but the benefit is that you keep your pain at a manageable level.

The big difference with pacing is that you know before you start the activity at what point you will take a break, rather than waiting for pain or fatigue to tell you when to stop.

The intervals you choose before taking a break need to be manageable for you.

After you plan your activity it is important to stick to your plan and take your scheduled break, even if you are still feeling good.

Taking scheduled breaks while your pain is “manageable” will allow you to perform the activity without causing your pain to increase. Gradually, your activity level will increase.