

Self-help series fact sheet 5

Introduction to pacing

It's important to understand that people suffering from long COVID and who overdo physical exercise can experience an intensification of symptoms which is out of proportion to the overdoing – called post-exertional malaise (PEM). This can be physical, but emotional and mental activity can also cause PEM.

A key to pacing is actually learning to listen to our bodies.

Society now is run at an extreme pace with our bodies expected to be active (whether that is physically or mentally) for every waking hour of the day. This puts a lot of strain on our ability to rest and heal.

Our bodies give us information about our health every day. The symptoms we feel are like signals – whether emotional or physical – and these cues can tell us a lot. Pain and fatigue are your body's warning signs.

When you are feeling unwell or ill it can sometimes be difficult to pinpoint the exact cause, and we hope to help do this by understanding how your actions can affect your symptoms.

So, we need to use pacing experiments to find your limits. We also need to take notice of the cues that our body is sending us and finally work out different ways to help your body heal.

When we are thinking about what takes our energy there are other considerations that



This fact sheet is supported by funding from the ACT PHN through the Australian Government's PHN Program.

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Information given in this fact sheet is intended as a guide only and some advice may not be relevant to your particular circumstance. These are only suggestions and your undertaking of these should be done at your own physical level or ability.

you need to be aware of that also impacts your energy.

These include:

1. **Physical activity:** doesn't mean jogging and going to the gym but we also need to consider activities such as bathing and dressing, blow drying our hair; housework; cooking; gardening; shopping; walking and driving. These all take up energy.
2. **Mental Activity:** Activities that require concentration, like reading and working on the computer.
3. **Social Activity:** Time spent with other people.
4. **Sleep and Rest:** The quantity and quality of sleep needed at night and rest during the day.
5. **Physical sensitivities:** Allergic reactions to food and other substances, vulnerability to noise and light, and sensitivity to weather and the seasons.
6. **Stress and Emotions:** Finances, strains in relationship intensify stress. Changes and uncertainty trigger strong feelings.

There is more information on how to define your limits in fact sheet 6 *Defining our limits and pacing tips*.

During this series of fact sheets there will be a number of these tips and tricks but if you would like further information on a particular subject please feel free to contact us by emailing info@arthritisact.org.au and we will send you further information and a list of support activities.