

Self-help series fact sheet 6

Defining your limits and pacing tips

So how do you actually stop from overdoing things?

One of the easiest ways to work out your energy limits is by keeping a diary. You could complete this throughout the day whilst you are resting or at the end of the day. It's important to note your activities and whether the activity would be classed as low, medium and high. Record details of your diet, your sleep and maybe include other factors such as levels of stress, weather, noise etc. All of these things will give you an indicator of the causes of your crashes.

You are welcome to keep a paper diary or there are a lot of apps nowadays that can also help you monitor your energy levels and find your new limits.

When you start your pacing journey consider using some of the tips below:

Take scheduled breaks: Rest daily, regardless of symptoms. REST rather than naps as naps **may** impact your sleep at night.

Spread out activities: Rather than doing 2 hours of gardening in a day spread this activity over 4 days, doing just 30 minutes a day. Do the same for other high energy chores such as housework.

Switch activities: Alternate between high, medium, and low intensity activities. For example, garden for 30 minutes and then do computer-based work for 30 minutes. Go for a walk for 30 minutes but then rest for 15 or 20 minutes. If you are doing your housework vacuum one room at a time and then change to something less physical like dusting or have a 5 minutes rest between rooms.



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Put limits on individual activities: Such as time on computer, phone, housework, standing, driving. *Be strict with yourself.* If driving long distances try and plan your rest breaks every hour – even if you just pull over in a safe spot and close your eyes for 5 minutes.

Use devices: Timers/alarms, pedometers, heart rate monitors, sit down instead of standing, and if necessary get a wheelchair or scooter to help you when you are out.

Being sensitive to time of day: Know your best time of day and schedule more demanding activities for that time

Delegate, simplify & eliminate: Have others do some tasks; and do things in a less elaborate way or stop doing some things

Control sensory input: Sensory overload is a common symptom intensifier, consider getting noise cancelling ear plugs for when you are out in busy areas such as shopping centres, for example try listening to quiet music through earplugs.

And most important make sure you include pleasurable activities in your life and you adjust your expectations and change your self-talk. Remember that while you are resting your body is actually busy healing.

If you need further information or support please have a look at our website at www.EmergeACT.org.au or the long COVID playlist on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@arthritisact3717