

# Pacing



*To motivate and support change*



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*Saving lives,  
Improving lives*

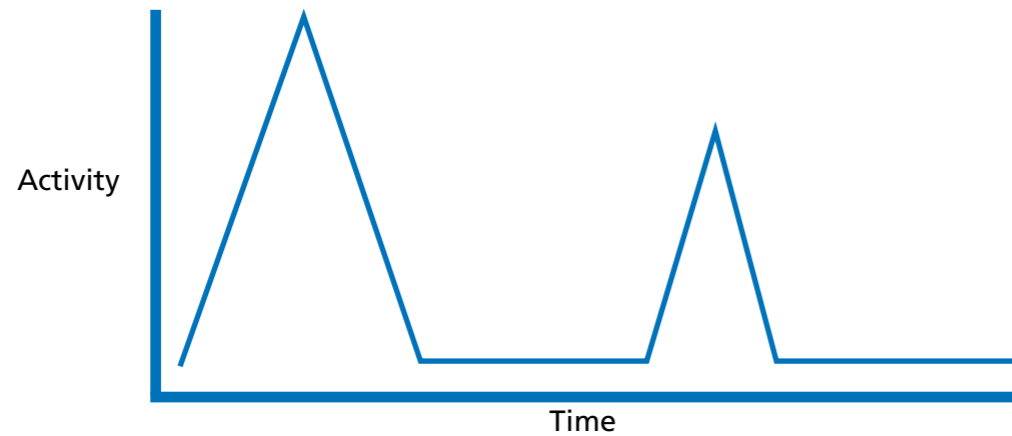
You can be

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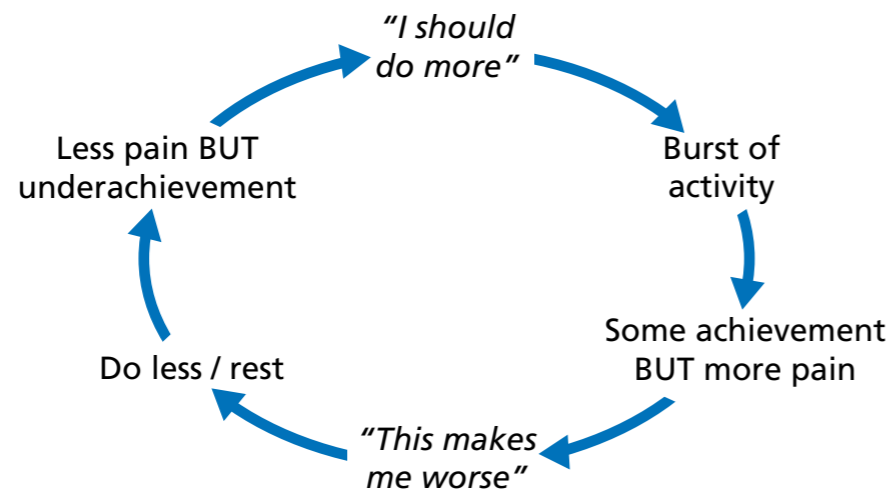
### Over/under activity cycling

Most chronic pain varies in intensity over the course of days or weeks. Basing what you do on how you feel results in overdoing things on a good day and underdoing things on a bad day. This is called over / under activity cycling.

Over / under activity cycling due to poor pacing



An example of over / under activity cycling



### Disadvantages of over / under activity cycling

- Pain controls how much you do and how long you do it for.
- You are unable to plan ahead or make regular commitments.
- People around you become unsure of your capabilities and so they can stop inviting you to join in.
- Frequent rest breaks and inactivity lead to deconditioning.
- Instead of a sense of achievement your good days are punished by increased pain.

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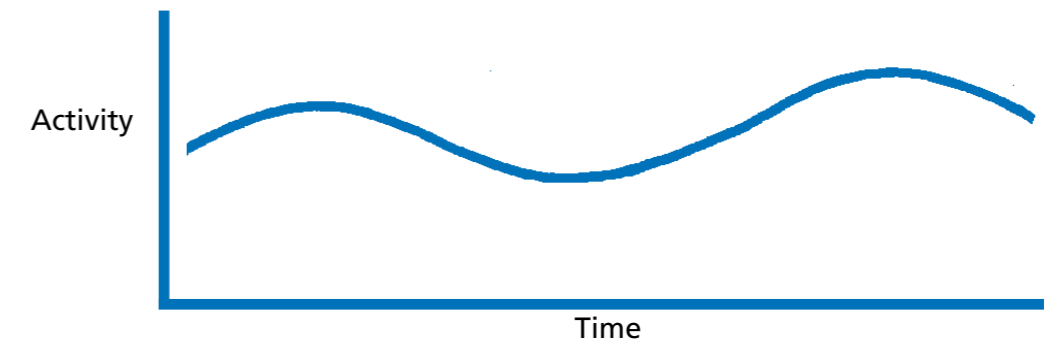
### Pacing

Pacing means balancing the day's activity so that the day is divided into periods of rest and activity. It will help you manage the day better and, by keeping to your planned target, means that you and not your pain will decide how much you do. Pacing means doing the activity whether feeling good or bad, not doing too much and not doing too little. The aim is to maintain an even level of activity over the day and week.

On a good day, do not wait for the pain to tell you when to stop. Still stick carefully to your plan to avoid overdoing things. Do not do more just because you are feeling good - you may pay for it the next day !

If you are having a bad day try to keep going as you had planned but try to break up activities more.

Levelling out activity by effective pacing



### Guidelines to pacing

**Prioritise.** Decide the most important things that need to be done today, that is, what has to be done immediately and what can wait until another time.

**Plan.** Plan activities so that difficult ones are spread out and not done all in one go. Decide what order to do things in, if you need help to do them, or if you need to do them in a different way.

**Tolerance level.** Work out your tolerance level or time level for each activity in your plan, that is, how much of the activity can be done at the moment without overdoing it (initially you may have to use an educated guess).

**Evaluate.** Stick to your plan. After several days carrying out this plan look back and decide if any changes need to be made.

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### Pacing up activity

There may be activities which you wish to increase.

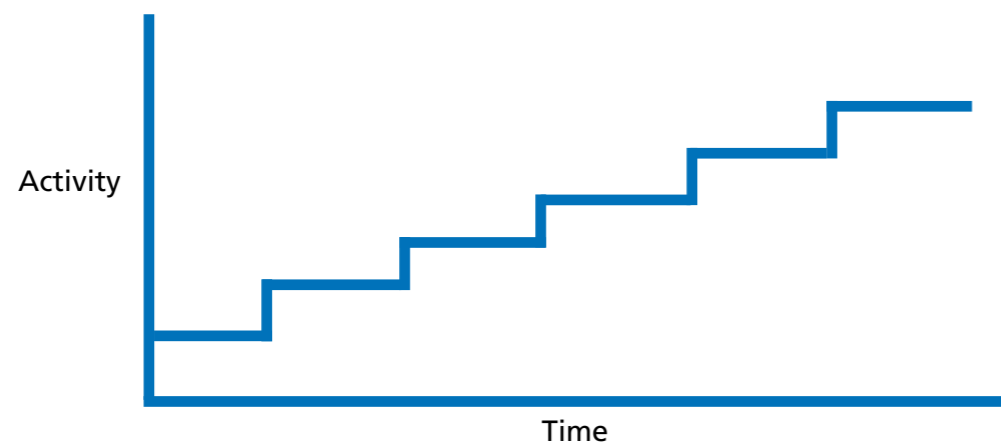
**Tolerance level.** Work out your tolerance level or time limit for the activity you wish to increase, that is, how much can be done at the moment without overdoing it.

**Daily target.** Set daily targets or goals by which to increase the activity. Do not do more than the target for that day.

**Record.** Keep a daily record of achievements.

**Evaluate.** Carry out the programme for the week and at the end of the week look at the record and set targets for the next week.

Increasing activity by effective pacing



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### Problem solving

1. Last time you went out for a meal with your friends it was a disaster! You hadn't really wanted to go in the first place. You'd had a busy day sorting out the weekend shopping and then you had to go and visit your mother (she was unwell). By the time you'd done all that, you didn't have time to get ready. Needless to say, after an hour the pain was so bad you couldn't bear to sit any longer, you made your excuses and left. Now you've had an invitation to go out again in two weeks time for another meal.

*From what you have learned on the programme, what steps can you take to help ensure that the next meal out is more successful ?*

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2. You're driving the family out for a day at the seaside. The journey usually only takes half an hour. This time, after only five minutes on the motorway, you come to a halt in a long queue. After fifteen minutes you've only moved forward about a quarter of a mile. The radio announces that there is a ten mile tailback after an accident. Now the temperature is rising, the children (and your partner) are getting restless and your pain is beginning to build up. Last time something like this happened you'd had a terrible day and then you had to go to bed for three days the pain was so bad.

*What steps can you take to gain control over the situation ?*

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