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*Active with Pain*

***Information for   
patients and carers***



**Grampian Pain Service**

**ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT**

The aims of exercise and activity:

* Help you feel more confident about movement
* Help you learn more about your pain
* Help you achieve your goals
* Increase your general fitness level, strength and endurance

It is common that when you have had pain for a long time you are likely to be less active than you had been previously.

The less active you become, the less you move your joints and the less you use your muscles.

“Muscles and joints were built for using,

They like to be active and moving”

Chronic pain often means ‘**Good’** and **‘Bad’** days.

During a bad spell you may rest more, which means you lose fitness and achieve less. On a good day however, you may find yourself doing the things you haven’t been able to do that have perhaps been building up. As a result you may become sore and tired and have to rest again.

This can become a **vicious cycle** of over-activity and rest. This may mean that you have to give up the things that you enjoy.

A cycle develops when you become less active where muscles and joints become stiffer and tighter.

A technique called **ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT or PACING** may help you get back to doing some of the things you have stopped doing.

When you start to increase your level of activity, you are more likely to feel aches and pains. **These pains are not a sign that you have harmed yourself,** they are commonly called “training pains” and all of us will have experienced them at some time. Before the onset of your chronic pain, you can probably recall how your body felt the first day after the starting a new exercise class or the day after spring cleaning the house or starting the gardening. Your body let you know that it wasn’t used to being this level of activity.

The **good news** is that if you start an exercise programme at a manageable level (a ***baseline*** level you are comfortable and confident at) and build up the amount of exercise gradually, you can move towards the goals that matter to you.

Think about how long it could take someone to train for a marathon, a lot of people know that they will have to start up to a year in advance. They plan their training programme to gradually increase the distance they run to allow the muscles and other tissues time to adapt and gradually increase their strength and endurance.

So, we like to think of the training programme you might be starting to plan as one that will take time, that by finding a comfortable starting point or baseline you will be able to lessen the aches and pains by gently increasing the amount you do.

It is good to remember that to achieve a gentle increase the activity has to be done regularly and with each increase, it is normal for your muscles and joints to feel tired and even a little achy – but not flare up your pain.

**TIPS FOR ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT:**

* Set yourself targets that are realistic
* Remember to build up gradually
* Progress can be slow, but remember to stay focused on your goals

***Do no more on a good day than on a bad day.***

Further information is available from:

* [www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk)
* [www.painconcern.org](http://www.painconcern.org)

**This leaflet is also available in large print.**

**Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Quality Development on (01224) 554149 for a copy. Ask for leaflet 1508.**

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments on how we can improve it, please call (01224) 554149 to let us know.

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**There are things you can**