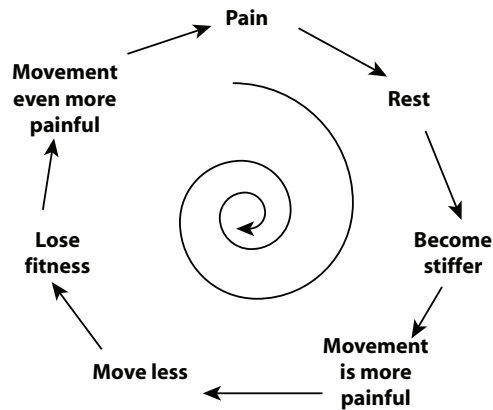
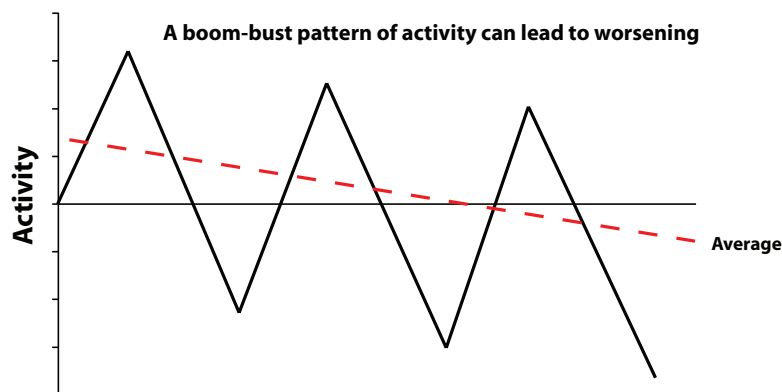


Pacing

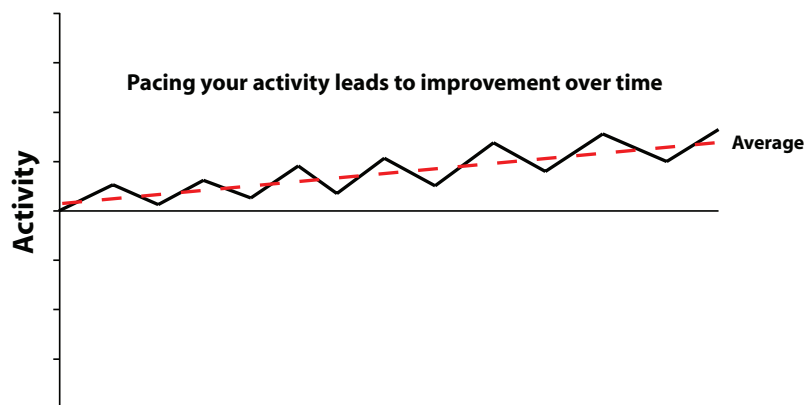
Chronic pain often leads to a dilemma. People with pain know that the more they do, the more likely they are to experience pain. Some people make the choice to do less, or to do nothing. This approach makes sense, but it is not normally a good choice. Doing nothing can lead to boredom and depression, which can make the pain worse. Also, doing nothing makes you less fit. This means that it takes less and less activity to make you feel pain.



Other people choose to be very active and to battle through the pain. This approach also makes sense, but it can also be counterproductive. Some people find that they push themselves too hard and end up suffering. They can be laid low for several hours or days following over-exertion.



Pacing is a skill that enables you to consistently carry out activities without causing extra pain. It is a middle ground between doing nothing and over-exertion. Pacing also means spending just enough time on an activity to get the most out of it, without pushing yourself so far that you end up in a lot more pain. Over time you may find that pacing enables you to do more.



Pacing instructions

The find a comfortable starting point (baseline):

1. Choose an activity - e.g. sitting, walking, mowing the grass
2. Measure the length of time you are comfortably able to do this. Do this at least three separate times - on good days and bad days
3. Take the average of these times, then subtract a fifth

Example: Sitting

Time 1	Time 2	Time 3	Average	Average - (1/5)
15 minutes	10 minutes	7 minutes	11 minutes	9 minutes

Common difficulties

“I got so involved I lost track of time”

Good pacing means knowing when to stop and take a break. Place a clock in full view, or set an alarm to go off after a certain amount of time.

“I don’t know how long to break for or what to do”

To make the most of a break it is important to change your position and body posture, and do something which engages you. It’s less helpful to just stop and do nothing. Walk around, do some stretching exercises, put on the radio. Some activities require shorter breaks, other require longer breaks.

“I make decisions based on how I’m feeling at the time”

This is often part of the boom/bust over-exertion cycle - doing more on good days and then suffering the consequences

Remember

- Pacing is about judging when to stop an activity based on TIME and not on PAIN
- Pacing will give you more control
- The baseline should be used on ‘good’ days and ‘bad’ days. To begin with you may find it difficult to limit yourself on good days.
- Using a baseline leads to improved tolerances and achievement.
- You may find a time useful to start with to remind yourself to change position.
- Taking a break is not a sign of weakness or failure: it is a wise move to allow you to gradually build up your stamina.