

## EXERCISE AND PAIN

### Information for you

Your healthcare professional may suggest some simple exercises in order to help you increase your activity levels and achieve your goals.

For example, John's long-term goal is to start bowling with his friends again. He has broken this down into 'do-able' chunks and is currently working on a graded walking plan. His physiotherapist suggests it might be useful to do some simple exercises to build-up the strength in his leg muscles. (Add picture)

Regular stretching and exercise will help keep joints lubricated and supple. It will also help build-up the muscles, which support your joints and improve your balance and co-ordination. Another advantage of exercise is that it stimulates the production of feel good chemicals called endorphins, which help relieve pain, tiredness, stress, and improve mood.

People often tell us that they don't have any time to do exercises. However, exercises can be simple things. For example, John's physiotherapist suggested some step-ups on the bottom stair. He built this into his day and did 10 every time he went upstairs.

### Work out your starting point

In the same way as you did with graded activity, work out how much of each exercise you can do now, on a good or bad day, without stirring up your pain at the time or later.

- The most common mistake people make is that they try to do too much to start with, or they have a “no pain, no gain” approach. They risk overdoing it and flaring-up their pain.
- It's better to do too little to begin with, be able to manage it and then to increase it.
- Stick to your plan. Don't be tempted to keep going if you are having a good day.
- If you are struggling on a bad day - don't give up. Try to do the number of exercises you planned to, but maybe do less movement or exert less effort when you do them. You may find it easier to chunk the exercises up throughout the day.
- Build up gradually, increasing the amount you are doing every second day. Keep increases small but consistent.
- A **little** increase in your symptoms is normal, to be expected and should settle quickly. Remind yourself that you are not causing any harm.

- Write up your plan for the week ahead.[See 'Setting Goals' for help on this] If you have been struggling to stick to the plan, slow the rate of progression down or even drop the number of repetitions down a bit and then progress more slowly.

If it's too easy, speed the rate of progression up and if it's about right, keep progressing it at the same rate.

Exercise and pain is part of a series of reliable, evidence-based advice to support you along the way to improving your function and quality of life, with pain.

Further information is available from:

- [www.chronicpainscotland.org](http://www.chronicpainscotland.org)
- [www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk](http://www.nhsinform.co.uk/msk)

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