



Chronic Pain Self Management Program

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Pacing: An effective strategy to help break the underdoing and overdoing activity cycle when you are experiencing pain with movement

The goal of pacing is to gradually increase your activity levels that are near normal as possible on most days. This can allow you to accomplish things that you want to do. Learning pacing techniques can be an effective tool to balance activity and rest. Below are some pacing tips which some people living with pain have found to be useful.

Source: LeFort, Sandy, et al. *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Pain (Chapter 6)*. Boulder: Bull Publishing, 2015.

- 1. Determine how you spend your time.** Monitor your daily activities, including your rest periods, to find out how you spend your time. Keep a diary for a couple of days. Choose a typical weekday and a day on the weekend. Note what activities you do and how long you can do them before you are bothered by pain. Note your rest periods and how long you rest.
- 2. Make a schedule.** Develop an activity schedule that includes rest breaks and stick to your schedule. For example, take 5 minutes of rest for every 20 minutes of activity. This is very individual, depending on the type of activity.
- 3. Be time oriented, not pain oriented.** Knowing how long you can do an activity before your pain gets worse means you can schedule specific activities for a certain number of minutes before taking a rest for a specified period of time. This keeps you, not the pain, in control.
- 4. Rest before your pain starts to get worse.** So many times we want to complete activities and push through pain. Keep to your schedule. Stop. Take a rest.
- 5. Incorporate change into your activity routine.** A change may be as good as a rest. If you are in a situation where you can't take a rest break, alternate activities frequently, change body position, stretch, or go for a short walk.
- 6. Use a timer to signal breaks.** Then you don't have to worry about trying to remember when to take your break.
- 7. Break tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces.** Take breaks between the smaller tasks, or schedule some smaller tasks on different days.
- 8. Avoid rushing.** Slow down. Plan ahead. Rushing can increase your stress. Planning can save you energy and reduce frustration.
- 9. Don't overschedule activities.** Work on developing realistic expectations of yourself. Sometimes, you just have to say no.
- 10. Prioritize your activities.** Some days, you may not be able to get everything done. Determine the most important thing you want to accomplish today and then work on that.



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Stanford HEALTH CARE



Action Plans: An effective strategy to help you do the things you know you should do in order to achieve your ultimate goals

Source: LeFort, Sandy, et al. *Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Pain (Chapter 2)*.
Boulder: Bull Publishing, 2015.

These are the basics of a successful action plan:

1. It is something you want to do.
2. It is achievable (something you can expect to be able to accomplish that week).
3. It is action-specific.
4. It answers the questions *What? How much? When? And How Often?*
5. On a scale from 0 (not at all sure) to 10 (absolutely sure), you are confident you will complete your entire plan at a level of 7 or higher.

In writing your action plan, be sure it includes all of the following:

1. What you are going to do (a specific action)
2. How much you are going to do (time, distance, repetitions, etc.)
3. When you are going to do it (time of the day, day of the week)
4. How often or how many days a week you are going to do it.

Example: This week, I will walk (what) around the block (how much) before lunch (when) three times (how many).

My Action Plan

This week I will _____ (what)

_____ (how much)

_____ (when)

_____ (how often)

How sure are you? (0 = not at all sure; 10 = absolutely sure) _____

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Comments							