Fatigue: ‘Pacing’ as a Strategy

Core Therapy / Community Chronic Pain Service
Community and Therapy Services
North and North East Lincolnshire

This leaflet has been designed to give you important information and to answer some common queries that you may have.
Introduction to Pacing

Pacing is a positive way of how to maximise your energy with daily tasks. Pacing means spreading out activity and alternating it with rest periods so that you are able to continue for longer. For example:

- **One hour of cleaning the house including: vacuuming, dusting and ironing**
  - Increased pain - have to rest for rest of day
  - 1 hour total activity

  ![Illustration](image)

- **20 minutes dusting**
  - Rest
  - 20 minutes vacuuming
  - Rest
  - 20 minutes ironing
  - No increase in pain - able to do more with the rest of the day

  ![Illustration](image)

Pacing is not about doing less activity, but spreading tasks out so that you can complete them more effectively.

Key tips for pacing:

- **Take regular rest periods**
- **Spread activities / or one activity throughout the day**
- **Challenge your ideas about the task and different ways to break it down**

Three strategies for Pacing are the ‘Three P’s’:

- **Plan** your activity in advance
- **Prioritise** your tasks for the day, think - do these tasks all have to be done today?
- **Pace** – always remember to break down your activity by having regular rest periods. Remember ‘little and often’.

A few examples of how to pace with common daily tasks include:

- **Cooking**: By planning what you are having in advance can enable you to break the task down into more manageable chunks. This could be that you sit in the kitchen to prepare the meal, take a rest period, cook the meal, rest prior to washing to the pots or loading the dishwasher and resting again afterwards.

- **Washing and dressing**: It might be useful to sit down whilst washing, making sure that all your toiletries are in one place for easy access, putting your socks, shoes and trousers on whilst sitting and then standing only once to pull them up. Another strategy could be to shave at a different point in the day, when you have had a rest period. By having a towelling dressing gown, this could save on energy spent drying your body with a bath towel.

It is important to remember that pacing activities does not only include tasks such as hobbies and going out, but can also incorporate day to day tasks such as washing and dressing, cooking and walking down the stairs.

**What is meant by a rest period?**

Good quality rest periods is essential in being able to pace. Everyone is different, so the amount of rest time will depend on the individual. Some people have a short 10 minute break whereas others require 30 minutes. There is no right and wrong answer, it is about finding out what works for you.

Examples of rest could include; relaxation, lying on the bed, mindfulness, sitting in a quiet room or space and breathing techniques.
Information for patients and visitors

Boom and Bust
For a lot of people they have good and bad days, meaning that some days you are more active than others. On a good day you may try to do more, which can lead to ‘overdoing’ it. As a result of this you may experience a number of ‘bad’ days and be unable to complete tasks you would wish to do.

The graph below demonstrates how this might happen.

Your Occupational Therapist can discuss this information further with you, and set individual goals around pacing and managing your fatigue.

Concerns and Queries
If you have any concerns / queries about any of the services offered by the Trust, in the first instance, please speak to the person providing your care.

For Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01472) 875403 or at the PALS office which is situated near the main entrance.

For Scunthorpe General Hospital
Alternatively you can contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on (01724) 290132 or at the PALS office which is situated on C Floor.

Alternatively you can email: nlg-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Confidentiality
Information on NHS patients is collected in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons (e.g. providing care and treatment, managing and planning the NHS, training and educating staff, research etc.).

Everyone working for the NHS has a legal duty to keep information about you confidential. Information will only ever be shared with people who have a genuine need for it (e.g. your GP or other professionals from whom you have been receiving care) or if the law requires it, for example, to notify a birth.

Please be assured however that anyone who receives information from us is also under a legal duty to keep it confidential.
Zero Tolerance - Violent, Threatening and Abusive Behaviour

The Trust and its staff are committed to providing high quality care to patients within the department. However, we wish to advise all patients / visitors that the following inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated:

- Swearing
- Threatening / abusive behaviour
- Verbal / physical abuse

The Trust reserves the right to withdraw from treating patients whom are threatening / abusive / violent and ensuring the removal of those persons from the premises.

All acts of criminal violence and aggression will be notified to the Police immediately.

Risk Management Strategy

The Trust welcomes comments and suggestions from patients and visitors that could help to reduce risk.

Perhaps you have experienced something whilst in hospital, whilst attending as an outpatient or as a visitor and you felt at risk.

Please tell a member of staff on the ward or in the department you are attending / visiting.

Moving & Handling

The Trust operates a Minimal Lifting Policy, which in essence means patients are only ever lifted by nursing staff in an emergency situation.

Patients are always encouraged to help themselves as much as possible when mobilising, and if unable to do so, equipment may be used to assist in their safe transfer.

If you have any questions regarding moving and handling of patients within the Trust, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department you are visiting.

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