



York Teaching Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Personal Exercise Diary

York Pain Clinic

Version 1

Aims – to enable you to:

1. Understand more about your pain and exercise.
2. Monitor the amount (repetitions, sets and frequency), type and intensity of exercise you are doing.
3. Identify what physical triggers there are to your pain, giving you confidence to implement changes yourself and better pace your activity.
4. Map progress with your health and strength.

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Exercise Intensity

RPE SCALE	
1	Nothing
2	Very Easy
3	Easy
4	Comfortable
5	Somewhat Difficult
6	Difficult
7	Hard
8	Very Hard
9	Extremely Hard
10	Maximal/Exhaustion

Using the RPE scale will enable you to monitor the difficulty level of each exercise you have completed during the session.

This will help you to see if the exercises prescribed are too easy/too hard – this takes a bit of trial and error so may take a bit of time to get it right.

Aim for 3-6 on the scale to start with.

Exercise and pain

How much should I do?

‘The best exercise is the one that gets done’. The level of exercise we start off at isn’t the important point; that we ARE starting to exercise gently on a daily basis IS important. This forms a baseline that can then be built upon as you progress towards your longer term goals.

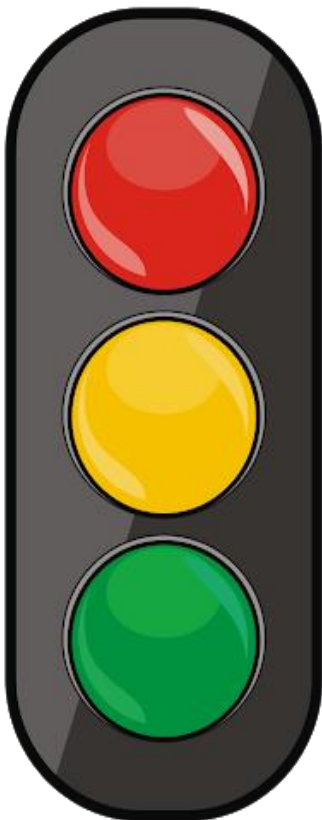
This will be different for everyone and specific to you as an individual, based on your goals. Your physiotherapist will discuss this with you.

It is advisable to break up your strengthening exercise days with alternate exercise like walking/cycling/yoga. This will allow your body to recover. You may find it beneficial to have a 'lighter' week once a month to mix up your routine and help the body recover and keep you motivated.

How do I tell if I'm doing too little/too much?

When performing a new movement or exercise, you can often feel some discomfort and this is normal and should not be alarming. Your body is doing something it is not used to doing and is moving in new and different ways. Any increase in discomfort should only be what is acceptable to you.

You may find using a 'traffic light' system helpful in gauging your symptom response to exercise and help you make changes.



Red light – Big increase in symptoms and/or your pain has not settled down to your baseline within 24hours. Allow pain to settle back down to previous baseline, reassure yourself, move gently and take it a bit easier next time*.

Amber light – some increase in symptoms but they have settled within 2 hours and are back to your baseline within 24hours. Repeat the exercise intensity/repetitions/duration in 48 hours. Only progress your exercise if you are at the green light stage.

Green light – No increase in symptoms. In order to progress, try a little bit more next time.

*If you experience an increase in your pain the following day, then we need to reduce, but not abandon, the exercises to avoid further exacerbating your symptoms. Take a step back to a level of training you have previously tolerated well.

E.g. if you did 3 sets of 10 repetitions, you could reduce the number of repetitions to 5. If there is still an increase in symptoms, then you could consider reducing the number of sets to 2; then 1 set if necessary.

If you find an exercise too difficult or it provokes greater discomfort, then choose an alternative to that particular exercise and continue with the other exercises. This may mean changing position e.g. standing to sitting.

Pain vs Delayed onset muscle soreness (DOMS)

You can also experience aches 24-48 hours associated with using different muscles when exercising, and this is normal, beneficial and sometimes the aim of the exercise (to work the targeted muscle group).

This is referred to as 'delayed onset muscle soreness' (DOMS) and should be differentiated from an increase in your usual pain. See this link for more information: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/pain-after-exercise/>

Exercise Myth Busters

I shouldn't exercise when I have pain as I am doing more damage

This is a myth we hear very regularly in the Pain Clinic. However, research has shown that pain does not always mean you are doing harm in long term pain (pain of more than 3 months in duration).

Pain during exercise isn't always a sign that we should stop what we are doing – pain is something our bodies learn to feel over time, and this can continue after the initial cause of pain has passed (flippinpain, 2021). This does not mean you should be going all guns blazing in exercise as

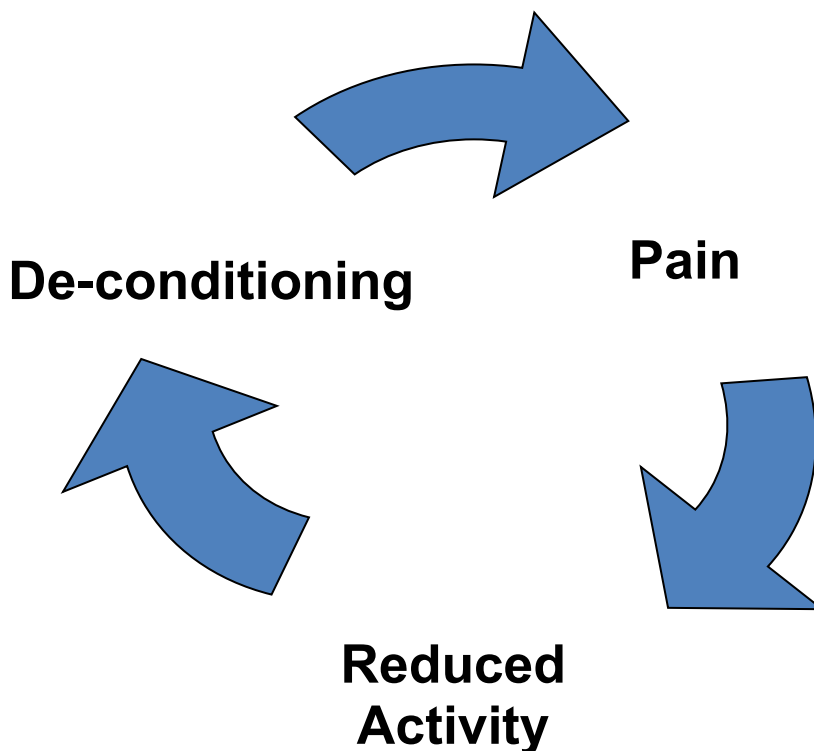
this may cause your symptoms to flare up (See the traffic light system above)

I won't see any improvements if I'm not doing much

This isn't always the case. People with persistent pain often struggle to stay fit and active. It's common to do less overtime but this leads to muscle weakness, stiffness, which leads to more pain (deconditioning).

Overtime, exercising on a regular basis helps your body become stronger and more used to the movements you are doing. However, this should be graded (slowly built up) to allow your body to recover and adapt.

Start off small and slowly build up the repetitions, sets, time and frequency of your activity. This can be done by identifying your baseline, i.e. the level of exercise you can do before your pain starts to increase.



If there isn't an improvement with my pain, I'm not making any progress

This is not true. Recovery looks different for everyone. This may be a resolution in pain. For others, this may be an ability to go back to work despite their pain. For others, this may mean that the pain is the same, but you are able to do more.

For example, Susan found that if she walked for more than 10 minutes, her pain would start to increase. She decided to stop walking at 8 minutes, before her pain worsened. Over the next few weeks, Susan increased her walking duration by 10% on each walk so that although her pain was still there, it was more controlled and she could now walk 15 minutes without an increase in her pain.

This may even be 1-2 repetitions, but writing this down will help you to know when to stop, before your pain tells you to.

I will see immediate results

Change takes time, so stick at it! We know from research that muscle strength can take around 6 months to improve. Just like learning a new skill e.g. playing a musical instrument, your body needs time to learn and change.

To help you stay motivated and continue exercising, the Live Well With Pain (2021) website suggests the following to help you get fitter and stay active:

1. Set personal goals that are meaningful to you – discuss this with your therapist.
2. Find out what's available in your area
3. Choose the things that are fun and easy to do
4. Enjoy activities with other people
5. Gently increase the amount of time doing activities
6. Give yourself regular rewards
7. Tell others about your progress – write it down to track progress (like this diary!)

I need to go to the gym to become stronger

No, there are a lot of different exercises and activities you can do from home, such as doing the ironing, gardening or putting the washing out. You can even use household objects such as cans or milk containers to act as a weight!

The 3 main types of exercise involve (Live Well With Pain, 2021):

1. **Stretching** activities will help loosen the tight muscles, ligaments and joints to increase flexibility, such as bending down to pick something up.
2. **Strengthening** activities will build stronger muscles, joints and improve balance.
3. **Stamina** activities e.g. walking will help you to do things for longer without more pain or tiredness.

Week 1	Which exercise did I do?	How many times did I do the exercise?	How did I feel during the exercise? (RPE 0-10)	How did I feel the day after?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Week 2	Which exercise did I do?	How many times did I do the exercise?	How did I feel during the exercise? (RPE 0-10)	How did I feel the day after?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Week 3	Which exercise did I do?	How many times did I do the exercise?	How did I feel during the exercise? (RPE 0-10)	How did I feel the day after?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Week 4	Which exercise did I do?	How many times did I do the exercise?	How did I feel during the exercise? (RPE 0-10)	How did I feel the day after?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Week 5	Which exercise did I do?	How many times did I do the exercise?	How did I feel during the exercise? (RPE 0-10)	How did I feel the day after?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Week 6	Which exercise did I do?	How many times did I do the exercise?	How did I feel during the exercise? (RPE 0-10)	How did I feel the day after?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

Useful resources on exercise

NHS website – hundreds of free exercises:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>

The importance of moving regularly (Doc Mike Evans):

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F5Sly9JQao>

Keep moving exercise Booklet (Versus Arthritis):

- <https://www.versusarthritis.org/media/3097/keep-moving-poster.pdf>

The Importance of Intensity in Physical Activity animation (Doc Mike Evans):

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMn8Tq5Eyao>

Ten Footsteps Your Journey to Living Well with Pain

- <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/10-footsteps-v2.pdf>

Contact details:

Pain Clinic General Enquiries: (01904) 725395/6/7

For any queries or questions regarding this information, please ask your therapist looking after your care.