

## PACING YOURSELF... *The balance between getting it done, and overdoing it!*

It is difficult in our busy lifestyles to balance our activities. We often set the bar too high or get caught out doing too much of something just to get things done. As physios we often see patients who have suffered the consequences of doing too much. Most times, after helping identify the problem and working on possible solutions/therapies, we (the patient and the physio) have to come up with an active programme that will help regain optimal comfortable function.



**Pacing is the key!**

### Why pace?

Experiencing pain for any length of time will often lead to changes in your activity level. Chronic pain particularly leads to significant changes in your day to day function - your tissues and whole body can become deconditioned. Sometimes you give up things completely because of pain. Trying to push harder – the “No Pain, No Gain” theory can lead to flare-ups that can set you back even further. On the other hand avoiding all activity can also lead to more pain and disability.

As physios we see a few common ways that people approach dealing with activity and their pain. One is the “Boom Bust” type who might feel a bit better so they try an activity that is too much, resulting in a flare up that sets them back significantly. Over time it takes less activity to cause these flare ups which is not helpful.



Another common scenario is those who only use pain as their guide and are fearful of doing an activity because it might make things worse. What we see over time is that it takes less activity to bring on pain as the tissues and body get more deconditioned.

An understanding of how the body and in particular the “pain systems” work will help you manage your problem and accordingly **pace your activity**. Our physios can help with this!!

### Where do you start?

Armed with this knowledge, it is important to keep in mind that any action you plan is *activity* controlled rather than *pain* controlled. This may mean that you need to be prepared for an element of discomfort with activities so long as it doesn't produce a flare up. So, your physio acts as your coach- helping you to identify the **goals** of your activities, the **activities** that you choose to do and finding the starting point for these – the **baseline**.

In the next issue we will look at how we might go about this in more detail. Meanwhile, should you like to read more, take a look at “*Explain Pain*” by David Butler & Lorimer Moseley available via [www.noigroup.com](http://www.noigroup.com) or have a look at the *Pain Health* website [www.painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au](http://www.painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au)