

Rest, Pacing and Timing

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Fatigue and pain must be respected. Overuse to muscles is not always apparent while it is occurring. Muscle pain is a warning signal that the muscles have been overused. The damage accumulates over a period of time and may not become obvious until you lose the ability to do an activity which was previously possible.

REST

Try to rest at least one hour during the day. If you work and resting at lunchtime is not possible, take a one-hour rest immediately after work. This will make your evening activities more productive and enjoyable.

Lie down to rest so your back doesn't have to support your body weight. Sitting takes 1/3 more energy than reclining. If you want to read, use an overhead book holder so your hand and arm muscles won't stay tense. You can listen to music, practice visualization or meditate; the point is to allow all the muscles in your body to relax.

PACING

Have you had days when you felt so good that you took on an ambitious project and kept pushing yourself so you wouldn't lose momentum? Were you incapacitated for a few days after that? It is tempting to overdo on your good days. However, you'll be more productive over all if you plan your activities for a balanced lifestyle.

Prolonged activities such as cleaning house or gardening can leave you exhausted for the rest of the day unless you break them into short segments with rest breaks in between. Before starting an extended activity, decide how long you will work at it and allow a 15 minute rest break every 30 minutes. Use a kitchen timer to let you know when to stop working and when to start up again.

Alternate light and heavy tasks throughout the week. Split your ambitious projects into daily segments throughout the week and stick to your plan no matter how good you feel on any particular day. Plan fewer activities for the days when evening activities are on the agenda.

TIMING

You may have different levels of pain and fatigue at various times of the day. Activities which are simple to perform in the morning may be difficult later in the day or vice versa. For example, if cooking supper in the late afternoon is too stressful, prepare most of it in the morning, to be reheated later.

HOW CAN YOU JUDGE IF AN ACTIVITY IS TOO STRESSFUL?

The easiest sign is a feeling of fatigue while you are in the midst of the activity. This seems obvious but many of us do not pay attention to our body. If the level of fatigue is out of proportion to the level of activity, the activity may be too stressful even if your mind says it shouldn't be.

If there is a change in the quality of movement. For example, you develop a tremor or "jerkiness" in your motions while performing the activity.

If there is a change in the quantity of movement; that is, decreased range of motion. For example, you can usually lift your arm to a certain height but that height lessens as you continue the activity.

If you start to use compensatory movements. For example, you "hunch" your shoulder in order to raise your arm or you swing your leg out to the side instead of flexing at the hip.