

Physiotherapy exercise guidance

The general health benefits of physical activity are well established:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/physical-activity-guidelines-infographics>

Structured exercise assists our recovery post injury and can also help with the management of long term conditions. For this reason, your physiotherapist will often include an exercise programme as part of your overall care.

General principles:

Initially you should start gently to try to avoid an unnecessary flare in pain. You may however experience a mild increase in symptoms which is short lived.



If this increase is mild and improves the more you exercise, this is okay.



If the pain is more than mild but settles within 30 mins or so, this is also okay.



If increases in pain are significant and prolonged, the exercises may need to be altered.

Exercises should become easier to do over time.

Exercise prescription:

Strengthening

- A rep: A repetition is the number of times you perform an exercise.
- A set: This is the number of reps you perform in one go without a break or rest period.

Initially try doing approximately 10 reps, 3 times per day. As you become more comfortable exercising, try doing 3 sets of 10 reps, with 1-2 minute rest periods, once daily instead.

When you start to find your exercises too easy, progress them by adding additional resistance. Once you start to add significant resistance, so that you can only manage 3-6 reps (per set), it may then be more suitable to carry out your exercises 3 times per week on non-consecutive days.

Evidence suggests that you will increase your strength more effectively by doing fewer reps with heavier resistance than you would by doing more reps with lighter resistance.



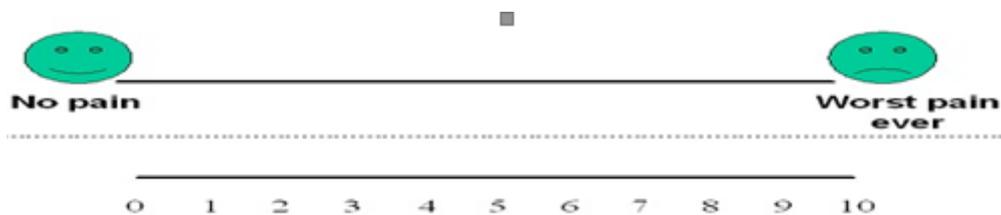
Stretching

Start by holding these for 10 seconds and progress to holding for 30 seconds as able. Repeat the stretch 2-4 times within each session.

Am I working at the right level?

Below is a simple guide to help you to determine if the exercise you are undertaking is too little, too much or just right. This should be used as a guide only as every person's experience of pain and exercise is different. Bear in mind, increasing your ability to perform an exercise or a task is also a sign of improvement even if your pain levels stay the same. Improvements may vary from day to day, this can be dependent upon sleep, diet and many other factors. So stay positive and keep going even if it was easier the last time you exercised.

Step 1: Give yourself a score out of 10:



Step 2: Give yourself a score out of 10:

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

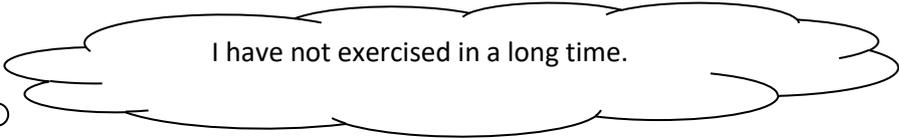
(RPE is your Rate of Perceived Exertion, how hard you feel you are working)



Step 3: Add both scores together:

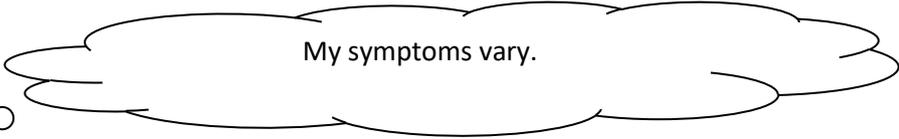
- The scores are taken while you are doing the exercise.
- If you score significantly less than 10 you might be able to work a little harder.
- If your score is around 10 you are likely to be working at the right level for you at this time.
- If you score significantly more than 10 you might need to reduce your exercise.

Common issues...



I have not exercised in a long time.

Take your time and gradually increase what you're doing and expect to have some 'exercise soreness' just like you would if you had been to a gym.



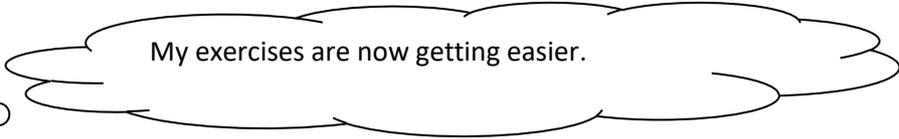
My symptoms vary.

This is very common. If you're very sore perhaps have a day off / reduce your physio exercises but try and do some other form of activity that exercises a different part of the body.



I am worried that I am developing more pain.

If symptoms are worsening and this appears to be due to your exercises, speak to your physiotherapist.



My exercises are now getting easier.

Remember to go back and revisit this scoring method as things change over time.

To make your exercise sessions harder you can do a few things. Only change one of these factors at a time.

- Add / increase the resistance.



- Perform the exercise slower (strength) or faster (power).
- Progress the exercise to make it harder. Your physiotherapist should be able to assist you with this (see linked blog for ideas between therapy sessions).

For further information see the link below, it does have some technical language, but highlights more ways in which you can vary your programme to suit your needs.

<https://blog.nasm.org/fitness/exercise-progressions-and-regressions-how-tos-of-scaling-movement>

We hope this have been useful for you. If it raises further questions you may want to write these down and ask your physiotherapist / health professional next time you are in contact with them.

