

## PACING AND MANAGING ENERGY

Pacing means to achieve and maintain a relatively even level of activity energy throughout the day, even though you may naturally want to try and keep up with your family and friends or community. Pacing is not all about stopping the activities you enjoy. With trial and error, pacing will allow you to find out how much activity your body can handle before pain begins to increase. Learning how to pace takes time, and during that time, flare-ups can happen as we test our limits.

### START SMALL AND KEEP IT SIMPLE

All you need is a calendar or a weekly planner that shows the days of the week and the hours of the day. A colour-coordinated calendar based on type of activity can help you immediately see if your week is balanced and whether you are missing rest periods. Make up a colour code that makes sense to you and be sure you can distinguish different activities by colour.

### REST PERIODS

Rest periods are essential to pacing. When you are planning your day's activities, you should always include rest periods. Resting can include meditating, reading, watching TV, or talking to a friend. Don't forget your brain needs a rest too. If your activity is mentally taxing, make sure your brain gets a break during your rest period. Pay attention to your body and take rest breaks accordingly.

### BE REALISTIC

Using your calendar will help you become time-oriented instead of task-oriented. This means planning to spend 30 minutes on a task and stopping to take a break when the time is up, even if you haven't finished the task. Set alarms on a watch or write down the time you started an activity in your calendar as a reminder of when it's time to take a break.

### BALANCE YOUR LIFE

While it's important to set your priorities for the week, like medical or other appointments you've made, it's equally important you spend time on activities that make you happy. Anything that makes you happy is an important activity. Knowing your priorities will help you decide what to cancel when you are having a bad day.

## FILL IN YOUR CALENDAR

Fill in your calendar at the beginning of every week. Start by scheduling any medical or other appointments you may have and make sure to add rest periods before and after. Include household chores and even daily living activities such as bathing and making meals. Don't forget rest periods after these activities too. Be realistic about how long you can actually spend doing an activity.

## DURING THE WEEK

As the week passes, make notes in your calendar any time you may have misjudged your ability to complete the scheduled activity. Maybe you began the day in more pain than usual or maybe you overestimated your body's ability to do a task – prioritize, cancel, or give yourself more rest times. Keep records of when you had to take additional pain medication or when you had to lie down.

## RESOURCES

- <https://www.liveplanbc.ca/pain-education/paced-activities/therapeutic-pacing>
- <https://www.pain toolkit.org/pain-tools/pacing>