

## Pacing

One of the most important skills is perhaps that of **pacing** or **activity management**. This means breaking tasks down into small, manageable chunks and stopping to relax in between these before your fatigue increases. Learning to do activities in smaller, manageable bits, from house-cleaning to work and going to parties, can help reduce fatigue. Taking breaks during a task can also lessen the stress of doing things like housework and socialising.

For example, if you want to tidy the house as you have guests arriving in the next few days, divide the cleaning and tidying up over a number of days, rather than tidying the whole house in one go the day before your guests arrive. So, if you knew, for example, that your guests would be arriving in five days, start to clean things up, say, three days before, a little at a time.

### **Establishing a baseline**

If you learn exactly how much activity you can do before the fatigue starts, or gets worse, you can make sure in future that you stop doing those things long before the fatigue starts or worsens.

There are times when it might be especially tempting to do a lot all at once. For example, if your symptoms are worse for seven days in a row, this means you are unable to do much over that time. When you get a day with fewer symptoms (a 'good' day), it may be that you overdo things to make up for that time. This pattern of boom-or-bust is very common when you have CFS/ME.

It is important that you do not fall into the trap of pushing yourself too hard and doing too much when you feel good. It will not be until after you have come to a halt that you start feeling the consequences of having pushed yourself too much. Stopping and taking breaks well before you feel tired or stiff may be difficult, but this is an important part of managing your recovery from CFS/ME.

### **Pacing and exercise**

Pacing is particularly important when it comes to increasing the amount of exercise (exercise is ANY activity) you do. We all know that if we suddenly do a burst of exercise we will be very stiff the next day. The problem is that whilst we are doing the exercise we usually feel fine, it is only later on that we realise that we must have over done things.

When you are working to increase your level of activity, set yourself small, gradually increasing targets. In this and all other activities you must learn to stop **before** you are too tired. It can be difficult to know at the time you are doing something when you have done too much, so it is important to set yourself a specific time limit or amount of a task you want to do, before you start.

It will take practice and patience to get the balance right between doing too much and doing too little but it will be worth it in the end.

## **Taking breaks**

Another important aspect of activity management, is building in breaks and rest periods into your day, whether you are busy exercising, working or socialising.

### **PRINCIPLES OF PACING**

1. Make a Plan - Prioritise what you have to do on a daily basis.
2. Build up tolerance to activities gradually.
3. Take regular rests and breaks in-between activities.
4. Change position regularly while performing activities.
5. Do small amounts often, rather than doing everything at once.

#### ***Example. Cooking a meal.***

If you are able to stand comfortably for 15 minutes and sit comfortably for 10 minutes

**PLAN -** Menu  
Ingredients  
Utensils  
Time required  
Pacing activity and rest

**PREPARE -** (5 mins standing/walking)

*REST*

**PREPARE -** (10 mins sitting, chopping/peeling etc)

*REST*

**COOK -** 1st half (stand 15 mins)

*REST*

**COOK -** 2nd half (stand 15 mins)

*REST*

Dish out and eat