



Exercise and being physically active when reducing opioid medicines

Being physically active and taking part in exercise is as important to people who live with pain as it is for those who don't.

- You may have agreed to reduce the opioid medicines you take for pain and have some worries about starting a new exercise at this point.
- Some people have told us that gentle exercise can be a good distraction and helped them to cope after making changes to their pain medicines.

How to start exercising and being more active with pain

It can be difficult to start exercising.

For some people who have never really exercised it can be difficult to know where to start. However, for others who were used to vigorous exercise before living with pain it can be difficult to go back to new forms of exercise.

You may have pain when you exercise, this is usually not a sign that you are doing the wrong thing.

Whatever activity or exercise you choose to do, start with something that you can build on, even with pain.

Exercise...

...is important for your health and fitness

...is an important part of maintaining a healthy weight

...improves mental health and mood

... can make daily and other important activities easier to complete even when you live with pain

"Start gentle. Remember pacing and developing periods of activity. Do a walk/exercise at a gentle pace...Build up time and 'speed' (however speed is measured - it's really exercise level)"

Discussion forum participant, male, lived with pain for unknown, but >8 years

You don't need to join a gym or buy special equipment to exercise. It can be as simple as walking a bit further or faster than normal.

Remember this is the start, so be kind to yourself and don't be too ambitious.

You can build-up your exercise gradually and you may look to increase how often you do it and how long you do it for.

How much exercise should I do?

It is recommended that people should do at least 150 minutes of activity a week, as well as strength exercises on 2 or more days a week.

Don't worry about hitting those targets straight away, we know that even a little movement is better than none.

Here's what some people had to say about exercising with pain:

"I cope by walking every day regardless of weather. On a good day I might walk 5 miles but on a bad day it may only be a mile, but I do it everyday and getting outside changes my perspective!"

Discussion forum participant, female, lived with pain "all her life"

" Ultimately, I find that walking helps fulfill a whole bunch of pain management goals: relaxation, the physical exercise, encouraging breathing, fitness and just enjoyment - those good brain-chemicals really help beat back the pain!

Discussion forum participant, female, 47 years old, lived with pain for over 20 years

"Yoga is awesome. Ballet is great fun. And the social aspects are great as well. Tai chi is fun, and is a great starting point for those who are less physically active."

Discussion forum participant, female, 47 years old, lived with pain for 31 years

What's important is ...

... choosing an activity that you enjoy and that you can take part in

Louise used walking to help her cope soon after stopping a high dose of opioids

" I got restless legs and they wanted to move all the time even though I wanted to sit still. Someone told me that walking was good and that it would help me to produce my natural endorphins, so I started to pace and that helped"

To find out more about Louise and how she has used walking to help her live well with pain, click [here](#), or scan the code below:



Ask your clinical pharmacist for more information about exercising and physical activity with pain and you can find out more about exercising with pain by clicking [here](#), or using your phone camera to scan the code below:

