

## Footstep 5: Getting active

Regular activity builds confidence and improves an individual's ability to manage their pain. It can be reassuring for persistent pain patients to know that getting active will be beneficial for them, even if activity and exercise was not a regular part of their lives before they developed pain.

### How can we help?

- Talk about what getting more active and fitter means – it does not have to mean running 10km in lycra!
- Ensure we have introduced and discussed the concept of pacing and goal setting (see Footsteps 3 and 4).
- We can talk about different types of fitness and things that can help. For example, an action plan to get fitter could include:

What?	Why?	Ideas and resources? (links below)
Stretching	To loosen muscles and ligaments that have tightened due to inactivity. Helps improve posture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gentle stretches, e.g. Versus Arthritis Keep Moving booklet.</li> <li>• NHS fitness studio videos.</li> <li>• Gentle yoga or Pilates.</li> </ul>
Strengthening	To build stronger muscles and joints. Makes climbing stairs and getting out of chairs easier. Improves balance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gardening.</li> <li>• Singing.</li> <li>• Using household objects for resistance, e.g. bottles of water or tins.</li> <li>• NHS fitness studio wake-up workout.</li> </ul>
Stamina	Building up to being able to do more without feeling pain or tiredness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Walking.</li> <li>• Swimming.</li> <li>• Static/road cycling.</li> <li>• Dancing to fun music.</li> </ul>

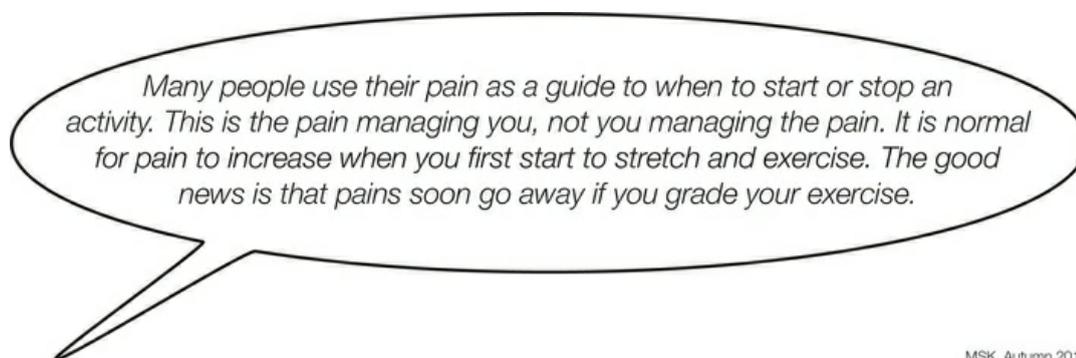
### Ideas to keep motivation

- Pace and get the challenge level right at the beginning – don't start with something too difficult.
- Be ready and organised, e.g. get trainers out the night before.
- Identify a team or people to work with to offer encouragement when it is a more difficult day.

### A note about pain and exercise

Patients have often been told/got the impression that they should be guided in how much they should exercise by the amount of pain they are experiencing.

**While this may be the case in acute pain, it is not the case in persistent pain, and it is important that we explicitly discuss this.**



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Grading exercise involves:

- Identifying the baseline distance/length of stretch that starts to increase pain levels.
- Halving this and having a rest at the midpoint.
- Gradually building up.

*So, for example, if pain starts to increase after walking the distance between 4 lamp posts, on day one, walk for 2 lamp posts, have*

a rest, then complete the walk by walking back. Each week, using pacing skills, increase the distance.



### Getting active

- Use goal setting and pacing to ensure any efforts to increase activity levels and fitness are as successful possible.
- Discuss that pain DOES NOT equal damage.
- Introduce the concept of grading exercise.



Identify your local resources for increasing exercise and building activity levels.

Do you have a display in the surgery or on your website?

Could you train your reception team in signposting these resources?



Resources for getting moving or exercise:

Versus Arthritis Keep Moving booklet:

<https://www.versusarthritis.org/media/1310/keep-moving-information-booklet-with-poster.pdf>

NHS fitness studio:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/wake-up-workout/>



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