

Patient information

Self-Management Information and Resources

Therapies Department

Goal Setting

When living with pain and fatigue it can have a big impact on your life and affect your ability to do the activities you enjoy doing. It sometimes means that you may want to consider making changes, to be able to get back to doing activities you have previously been able to do.

Making positive changes can really improve the management of your condition but at times, can be difficult to achieve. It's a good idea to change a little bit at a time.

Making change doesn't happen on its own; you may wish to introduce change in your life through structured goal setting.

It is helpful to set yourself a goal to assist making change; it helps you choose what you want to change to improve your health and well-being. Knowing what you want to achieve helps you to focus and make a practical plan of action.

What is Goal Setting?

Goal setting is a process for thinking about what you might want to change, for example you may wish to meet your friends more frequently, walk more often, or restart a hobby you previously enjoyed.

Why Set Goals?

Setting goals can give you long-term plan and short-term motivation to introduce positive change. It is important to make sure your goals are specific, so you are fully focused on what you want to achieve.

How to Set a Goal?

Using SMART goals are a way of making sure your goals are achievable given your current circumstances.

SMART stands for:

- S** – Specific.
- M** – Measurable.
- A** – Achievable.
- R** – Realistic.
- T** – Timely

An example of this might be:

I will walk the dog to the local shop three times a week in six weeks' time. To be able to achieve this goal within the timescale of six weeks you need to consider setting smaller goals to progress achieving the end goal.

For example: Week one:

I will walk the dog accompanied by friend/ family member; ask for help if I tire of gripping the lead. Initially aim to walk half the distance, twice this week and perhaps plan a rest break if there is an appropriate place to sit.

If you have felt able to achieve 'week one' goal, you can consider progressing your goal e.g. the distance you walk and or frequency.

For example: Week three

I will walk the dog accompanied by friend/ family member. Aim to walk the full distance twice a week.

You should continue to evaluate how able you are in achieving your goal and whether you can progress your goal further again or maintain at the same level.

This process is about planning short term goals to achieve your long term goal at the end of the six week period.

It is always important to make sure the goals you set for yourself are realistic to enable you to experience a sense of achievement. It is hoped that this approach will motivate you to continue to use goal setting as a way to improve your overall health and wellbeing.

Setting a SMART goal

Setting a SMART goal assists you to manage your condition. Remember your goal needs to be in line with the SMART structure on page one.

My goal is

My specific goal	→	
When will I do this?	→	
For how long?	→	
How often will I do this?	→	
Where will I do my goal?	→	
How will I monitor my progress? What will my check points be at the end of the day / week?	→	
Do I need anyone to assist me?	→	
How important is it that I achieve this goal?	→	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How confident am I in achieving this goal?	→	0 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10
How will I feel if I achieve this goal?	→	

How to complete your activity chart

Planning, pacing, prioritising and problem solving can help you manage your pain and fatigue.

It can be difficult to assess how much energy you use on different tasks during the day or week.

To gain a better understanding on how your daily tasks affects your pain and fatigue it can be useful to monitor your activity for one week.

On the activity chart, record your activities, when you do them, how long they take and the energy levels you use.

- Mark the activity as red when it's a high energy task. High energy is whatever you consider it to be- it could be physically demanding (washing up, gardening), mentally challenging such as (office work, shopping online) or emotionally intense (family/ friends' meetings).
- Colour the activity yellow if it's low energy. This is when you're doing something which isn't using a lot of physical, emotional, and mental energy (light housework).
- Use green for rest time, for example when you're reading or watching TV.
- Use blue for sleep.
- When your pain or fatigue is very noticeable, for example, you have had to stop what you were doing, sit down or go to bed to rest, put a cross through the activity.

At the end of the week, look back at your diary and ask yourself the following:

- Did you pace, plan and prioritise your activities?
- Did you take regular rest breaks?
- Did you alter your activities frequently to change your posture, alter the demands on your body?
- Did you sleep through the day?
- Did you plan enough time for socialising and completing enjoyable tasks?
- Did you find time for relaxation?
- Are there long blocks of high-energy activity with no rest breaks?
- What changes will you make next week?

Completing your activity chart will provide you with information on how you are currently organising your week and whether making small changes could help you to manage your pain and fatigue better

Repeating the process of completing your activity chart can be helpful once you have implemented changes, to see if the changes you have made have improved your pain and fatigue.

Activity / Pain Monitoring

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5am - 6am							
Pain score							
6am - 7am							
Pain score							
7am - 8am							
Pain score							
8am - 9am							
Pain score							
9am - 10am							
Pain score							
10am - 11am							
Pain score							
11am - 12pm							
Pain score							
12pm - 1pm							
Pain score							
1pm - 2pm							
Pain score							
2pm - 3pm							
Pain score							

Activity / Pain Monitoring

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
5am - 6am							
Pain score							
6am - 7am							
Pain score							
7am - 8am							
Pain score							
8am - 9am							
Pain score							
9am - 10am							
Pain score							
10am - 11am							
Pain score							
11am - 12pm							
Pain score							
12pm - 1pm							
Pain score							
1pm - 2pm							
Pain score							
2pm - 3pm							
Pain score							

Energy Conservation

What is energy conservation?

Energy conservation is a way to save energy and improve its use when it is needed.

Why should you try to save energy?

Energy conservation is important in long term conditions. Sometimes the way you do a task, how often you do the task, and how long the task takes can increase tiredness and pain and stiffness. Energy conservation is a way of doing things so you have more energy to do the tasks that you enjoy and are important to you.

How can you save energy?

There are things you can do to save energy. Here are a few tips:

- 1. Prioritise:**
Ask a friend or relative to do the more tiring tasks, leaving you the energy to do the tasks you enjoy.
- 2. Plan:**
Try to plan your tasks as much as possible. Try not to do all your tiring tasks at once.
- 3. Pace:**
Try to make your tasks simpler and aim to have a balance between rest and work. This means taking regular breaks, especially during longer tasks. Try to take five minutes rest every 20-30 minutes.

This could be done by:

- Having any items you need to complete the task within easy reach.
- Try to do tasks such as ironing sitting down. Make sure your seat or chair is comfortable and easy to get on and off, for example, use a perching stool.
- Avoid tasks that can't be stopped easily if your pain is aggravated.
- Using assistive devices can reduce the need to lift, bend or stoop during tasks.

For example, using a long handled sponge during washing can reduce the need to stretch.

What will be the benefits of saving energy?

Changing habits of a lifetime may be difficult at first. However, you are not giving into your arthritis, you are taking control.

There are benefits to saving energy, which include:

- Reducing your pain and stiffness.
- Reducing your tiredness.
- More energy to do your enjoyable and important tasks.
- Improving your quality of life.

Six components of energy conservation

- Prioritise
- Plan
- Pace yourself and keep to your limits
- Change position frequently
- Be willing to think about doing things differently
- Change the equipment to make things easier

Think about the goal you have set yourself and how you can apply the above six components to help you achieve your goal.

I will prioritise

.....

.....

I will plan

.....

.....

How can I pace this goal?

.....

.....

How can I change my position / posture?

.....

.....

How could I do it differently to make it easier?

.....

.....

Is there any equipment I could use to make it easier?

.....

.....

Improving Sleep Patterns

Sleep is not only a period of rest during our waking lives but is needed to keep our bodies and minds functioning smoothly. The quality and quantity of sleep we receive impacts on our health, relationships and work. Poor sleeping patterns are known to be a common problem within our society and can be further disrupted by pain. Most adults require at least seven and a half to eight hours sleep a night.

Below is some advice that may help you to improve your sleep patterns:

- Develop a sleep cycle. Try to get up and go to bed at a similar time every day, even on weekends. This will help to train your 'biological clock' and help you to sleep better and be more alert when awake.
- Exposure to daylight at the start of the day helps to regulate your biological clock. Try, if possible, to go for a short walk in the mornings.
- Do not go to bed before you are tired. If you go to bed and can't sleep, get up and do something that you find relaxing until you feel tired and then go back to bed.
- Avoid naps during the daytime. This will ensure that you are tired at bedtime. If you do need to go to bed during the day, go at lunch time and set an alarm.
- Regular moderate exercise can help to deepen sleep. However, avoid exercise within two to four hours of going to bed as this will affect sleep.
- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine (coffee, tea, chocolate) smoking four to six hours before bedtime as these will prevent quality deep sleep.
- Avoid using devices before bedtime, leaving up to 60-90 minutes device free before you intend to go to sleep.
- Avoid excess alcohol four to six hours before bedtime. Although alcohol has an immediate sleep-inducing effect, it will later lead to broken sleep patterns.
- Drink herbal tea or hot milky drinks instead. These will help you to relax rather than stimulate you before bedtime.
- Avoid large meals or large fluid intake late at night, as this could cause poor sleep due to indigestion, heart burn or frequent awakenings to go to the toilet.

Ensure your bedroom is comfortable (for example):

- Dark, unless you are reassured by having a night light on.
- Comfortable temperature, a room that is too hot or cold can interfere with sleep.
- Block out all distracting noise; wear ear plugs if noise bothers you.
- Comfortable bedding, ensure your mattress is adequately firm and comfortable, the same applies for pillows.

Bedtime routine:

- Take plenty of time to get ready for bed, giving you time to relax and wind down before bedtime.
- Have a hot shower or bath before bedtime. This will help you to relax and wind down before going to bed.
- Tranquil music designed to help relaxation and sleep could be used. This is a good alternative to watching television in bed as it is less stimulating and will therefore not affect your ability to get to sleep.
- Do not allow yourself to lie in bed worrying. If necessary set aside time before bed to write down anything that is worrying you or what you need to do. This will then leave your mind free to relax and you can deal with the list in the morning.
- Improving your posture in bed can be helpful. Identify which joints are hurting; careful placement of pillows can sometimes help.
- Improving sleep habits requires patience, you may not see an improvement immediately. Take your time to implement a few of the above suggestions at a time.
- If pain is keeping you awake at night discuss your medication with your family doctor (GP). Sometimes adjusting the time you take your painkillers/anti-inflammatory medication can help.
- If you have prolonged poor sleep and are struggling to cope during the day discuss this with your GP, sleeping tablets may be an option to restore your sleep cycle.

My sleep routine

The sleep problem I have is.....

.....

.....

How can I improve this?

.....

.....

How can I measure / know if my sleep has improved?

.....

.....

Is this achievable?

.....

.....

Is this realistic?

.....

.....

How much time should I give for this change in my sleep pattern to occur?

.....

.....

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

You will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Useful resources

Exercise for Health GP Referral Scheme

www.liverpool.gov.uk/lifestyles/services/gp-referrals

The Life Rooms:

Telephone: 0151 478 6556

www.theliferooms.org

Citizen's Advice

Telephone: 0808 278 7840 (opens Mon-Fri 09:00-17:00)

<https://www.citizensadvice.liverpool.org.uk/>

Access to Work

<https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work>

Livewell Liverpool City Region

<https://www.thelivewelldirectory.com>

NHS choices

www.nhs.uk

NHS Fitness studios

www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio

The Sleep Charity

www.thesleepcharity.org.uk

Everymind Mind Matters NHS

Every Mind Matters - NHS (www.nhs.uk)

Pain Toolkit

www.paintoolkit.org

Retrain Pain

www.retrainpain.org

Talk Liverpool: 0151 228 2300 (Mon to Fri 8am – 6pm)

<https://www.talkliverpool.nhs.uk>

Meditation apps

Calm: <https://www.calm.com>

Headspace: <https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app>

www.versusarthritis.org

Further information

Rheumatology Department Telephone:
0151 706 2760

Textphone number: 18001 0151 706 2760

Author: Rheumatology Occupational Therapy Review
date: January 2026

All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

يمكن توفير جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالمرضى الموافق عليهم من قبل النتمان المستشفى عند الطلب بصيغ أخرى، بما في ذلك لغات أخرى وبطرق تسهل قراءتها وبالحروف الطباعة الكبيرة وبالصوت وبطريقة برايل للمكفوفين وبطريقة مون والإلكترونية.

所有經信托基金批准的患者資訊均可以其它格式提供，包括其它語言、易讀閱讀軟件、大字

體、音頻、盲文、穆恩體 (Moon) 盲文和電子格式，敬請索取。

در صورت تمایل میتوانيد کلیه اطلاعات تصویب شده توسط اتحادیه در رابطه با بیماران را به اشکال مختلف در دسترس داشته باشید، از جمله به زبانهای دیگر، به زبان ساده، چاپ درشت، صوت، خط مخصوص کوران، مون و بصورت روی خطی موجود است.

زانیاری پینوئیددار بهو نمخوشانهی لهلایمن تراستموه پسمند کراون، نمگر داوا بکرنیت له فۆرماتمکانی تردا بریتی له زمانمکانی تر، نیزی رید (هاسان خویندنامه)، چاپی گموره، شریتی دهنگ، هیللی موون و نملیکترۆنیکی همیه.

所有经信托基金批准的患者信息均可以其它格式提供，包括其它语言、易读阅读软件、大字
体、音频、盲文、穆恩体 (Moon) 盲文和电子格式，敬请索取。

Dhammaan warbixinta bukaanleyda ee Ururka ee la oggol yahay waxaa marka la codsado lagu heli karaa nuskhado kale, sida luqado kale, akhris fudud, far waaweyn, dhegeysi, farta braille ee dadka indhaha la', Moon iyo nidaam eletaroonig ah.