

## Physiotherapy Department

# Managing a Set-back

When you suffer from a long term condition such as arthritis or persistent back pain it is normal to experience a flare up or worsening of your symptoms resulting in a set back.

Sometimes this may happen due to a trigger, doing too much, not doing enough or sometimes there may be no apparent reason at all. This is unlikely to be due to any kind of injury.

### Here are a few guidelines to help you cope during a set-back:

**Be Prepared** - Accept that this will happen and stay calm.

**Medication** - Medications can be taken to help ease the pain and inflammation. Ask your GP or local pharmacist for advice

**Heat** - The use of heat can help with pain and muscle relaxation. Use a warm water bottle, or microwavable wheat bag, following the instructions provided when you purchased it. To protect your skin from heat burns, wrap the item in a few layers of towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish.

**Cold** - The use of ice can help with pain and inflammation. Use crushed ice cubes or a bag of frozen peas. Protect the skin from an ice burn by placing the ice pack in a wet towel. Leave in place for 10-15 minutes. It can be reapplied after 2 hours if you wish. It's normal for the skin to become pink with either heat or ice, however if you experience discomfort or a burning sensation remove the item immediately. Don't apply heat or ice packs if you have poor skin sensation or poor circulation, if you are diabetic or over areas of infection.

**Exercise** - Your physiotherapist will have prescribed a set of exercises to help you manage your condition. It is recommended you build this into your routine so they become part of your normal day. If your **set-back** means you are unable to perform certain exercises due to the pain, select easier ones until you can resume your normal routine.

**Mental Health** - Look after your mental health. Being anxious or stressed will often make the pain worse, so it can help to use relaxation techniques to release muscle tension and anxiety. Consider hobbies or activities that help to distract from the pain. Stay connected to friends and family.

**Active Lifestyle** - Maintain an active lifestyle. In long term conditions, pain does not mean harm but can be the consequence of losing strength and fitness. Seek ways of leading an active lifestyle.

**Boom or Bust** - During a **set-back** you may have to adjust your level of activity and not push yourself to do too much. Equally do not resort to complete rest. Prioritise your list of tasks. This helps to avoid the 'Boom and Bust' which otherwise leads to more frequent **set-backs**.

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**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

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**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

Jeżeli są Państwo zainteresowani otrzymaniem tych informacji w innym formacie lub wersji językowej, prosimy skontaktować się z nami, korzystając z ww. danych kontaktowych

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