



# Pacing and energy management

## The 3 P's Principle (Pace, Plan and Prioritize)

Learning to pace, plan and prioritize your daily activities can help control the big ups and downs in your symptoms. This is also known as living within your energy envelope. Finding the right activity level will require patience and experimentation. Creating a record of your daily activities and how you feel throughout the day will help identify which activities require the most energy and determine how much activity you can manage without risking crashing or relapse. From this, you'll be able to set a baseline of activity that you can safely carry out every day. Your levels of activity can then be increased in a controlled way over time as your energy levels and symptoms improve.

In order to identify your baseline, you'll need to consider all of the potential energy demands of an activity:

- **Physical:** moving, standing, reaching
- **Mental:** speaking, reading, writing, remembering, concentrating, processing information
- **Sensory:** noise, light, temperature
- **Emotional:** stress, excitement, fear, upset, sadness

## Pace

People with Long COVID can easily fall into a cycle of feeling well, doing too much, and then feeling worse again. Learning to pace yourself can help break this cycle and allow you to do more without experiencing setbacks.

### Tips for Pacing:

- start with simple goals that you can meet on good and bad days
- break up activities into smaller tasks and spread them out throughout a day or week
- stop and rest before the activity is completed, even if you aren't feeling tired
- rest between activities
- perform activities while sitting whenever possible

By pacing your activities, you ensure that:

- you're controlling the demands you place on yourself
- you're ensuring these demands are in line with your current capabilities
- you're exposing your body and mind to these demands in a regular and controlled way to support your progressive recovery.

## Plan

When planning your day or week, spread your activities out rather than trying to fit them all in one day, if possible. Think about when your energy levels may be at their best and complete your high-energy tasks at this time. Can an activity be graded so it doesn't have to be completed all at once? Can you, for instance, clean just one room rather than the whole house in one go?

As well as planning your activities, it's equally important to plan your rest and relaxation times to allow you to "recharge". Plan rest periods as many times as needed throughout the day.

### Tips for planning:

- plan ahead by using a weekly planner to manage time and energy
- create a routine
- gather necessary items in advance and keep them within reach while completing activities
- look for tools or equipment to reduce effort

## Prioritize

When your energy levels are low, you may need to make sure that the energy you use is spent on the activities that are most important to you. It may also be useful to identify what activities in your day are necessary – that is, which tasks "need" to be done and which you "want" to do, what activities could be carried out at a different time or day, and which activities somebody else could assist with.

### Tips for prioritizing:

- create a balance of activities you need and want to do
- look for activities that make you feel energized
- delegate or eliminate tasks if you can
- learn to say "no".