

Chapter 8

GETTING ACTIVE



INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we will look at how exercise can:-

- Reduce avoidable symptoms
- Improve your general health and
- Help you lead a more active life

We will also gain an understanding of the different types of exercise and the principles which will help you to design an appropriate exercise plan for yourself.

Using the principles of pacing, you will be able to find a suitable starting level and will learn how to progress from there.

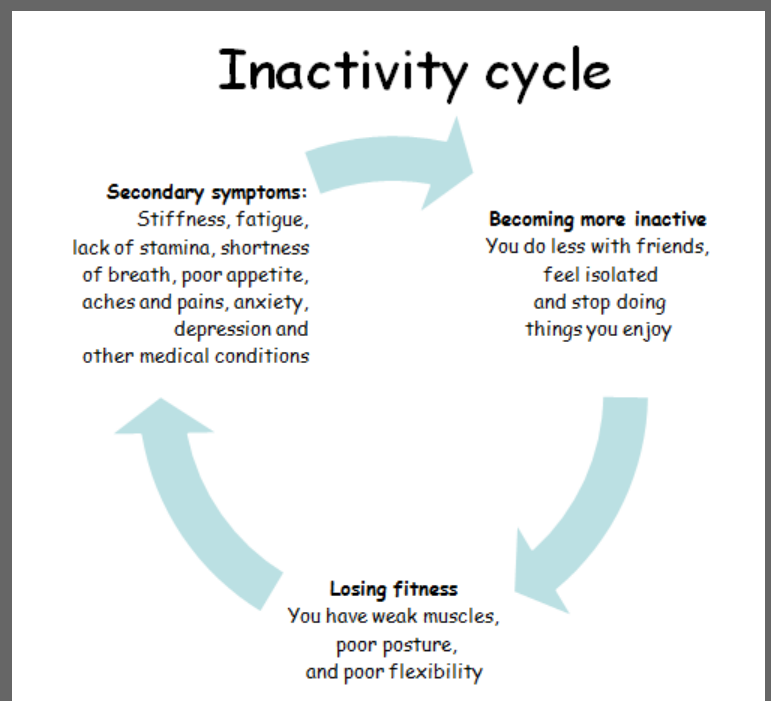
And finally, we will look at how to deal with relapse.

EFFECTS OF A SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

SECONDARY SYMPTOMS

An inactive lifestyle can eventually lead to:-

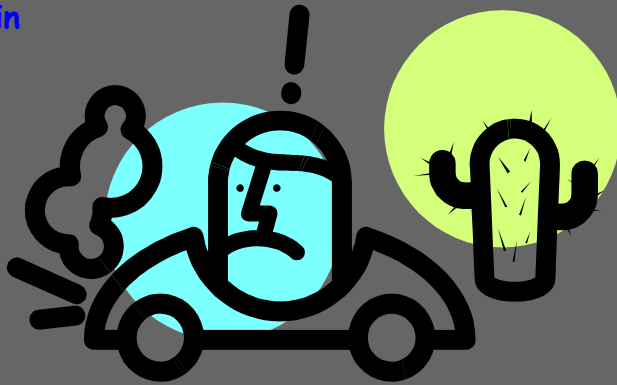
Weakening muscles
Poor posture
Stiffness and lack of flexibility
Fatigue
Lack of stamina
Poor appetite
High blood pressure
Increased weight
Osteoporosis
Anxiety and stress
Poor sleeping patterns
Depression
Aches and pains
Increased sensitivity to pain



Looking at the above cycle starting at the 2 o'clock point, you will see how it is possible to keep going round in ever-decreasing circles, unless you make a point of breaking out!

DISEASE OR DIS-EASE

The body is designed to move and work, and just like a car, it will deteriorate if not used and maintained. Even a car in immaculate working order will have problems if left unused for a long period of time. At the very least, the batteries will run down and the car won't start!



There is a saying:

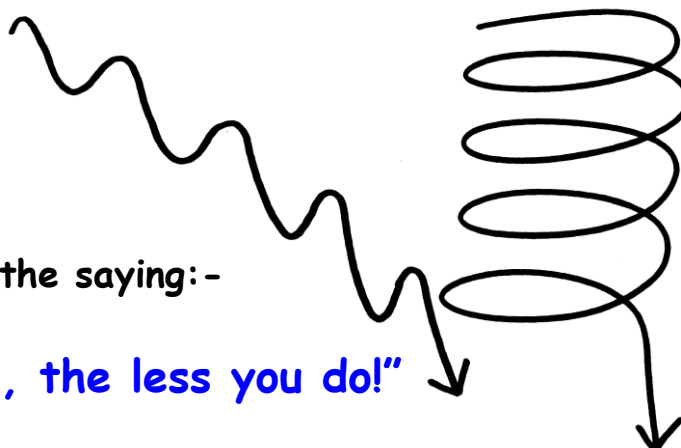
"The less you do, the less you can."

Inactivity can result in a vicious circle.

People may exercise less because they are stiff, tired, out of breath, weak, depressed, stressed, in pain and unable to concentrate or sleep well. Without the counter-effects of Exercise, these symptoms can get worse.



Spiralling to Disability

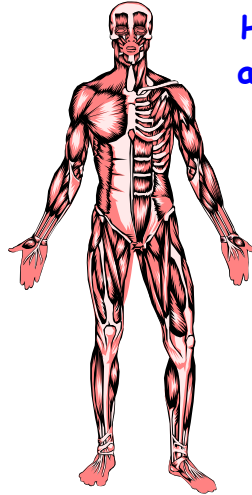
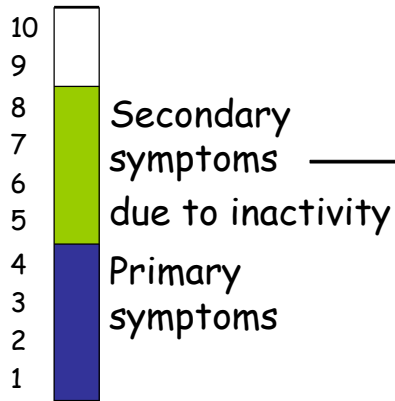


So, you could add to the saying:-

"The less you can, the less you do!"

Secondary Symptoms

(symptoms that you can do something about)



How many of these symptoms are due to a chronic condition and how many are due to inactivity ?

LEADING an ACTIVE LIFESTYLE and INCLUDING some FORM of EXERCISE

Exercise and activity will at best remove and at least improve secondary symptoms.

AND

Exercise can directly improve some primary symptoms due to conditions such as arthritis, heart disease and diabetes.

Exercise and a more active lifestyle can correct the effects of inactivity.

AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

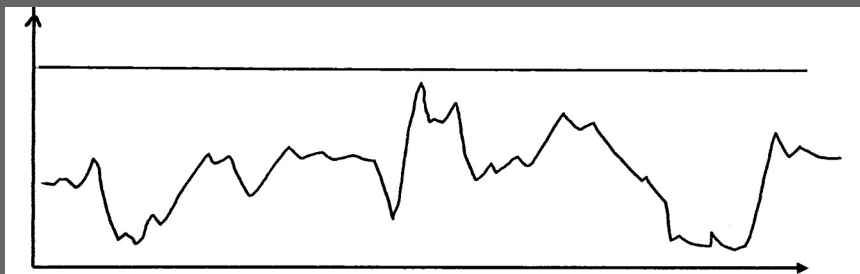
Many people are unaware of
how active or inactive
they really are.

Energy management RECAPPED

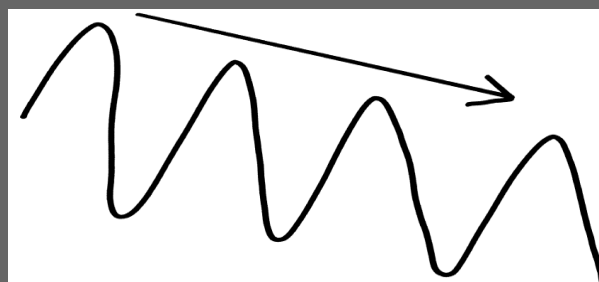
In chapter 6 on pacing, you may have thought about how active you are on a day-to-day basis, and you may even have filled out the activity diary.



You would have certainly noticed how variable your days are:-



And you might have noticed the negative effects of the boom-and-bust cycle - doing too much followed by doing nothing:-



Have another think about the amount and type of activities that you do during the course of a typical day or week. You might be surprised at just how active you really are. Among the things you might like to consider are:-

gardening



ironing

cooking

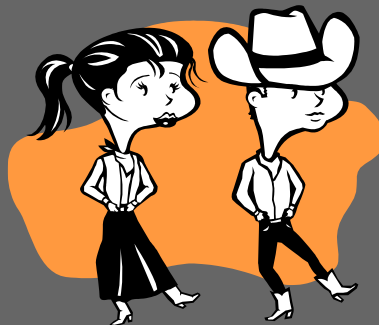


walking



What about hobbies?

Anything that gets you moving
can be considered as activity.

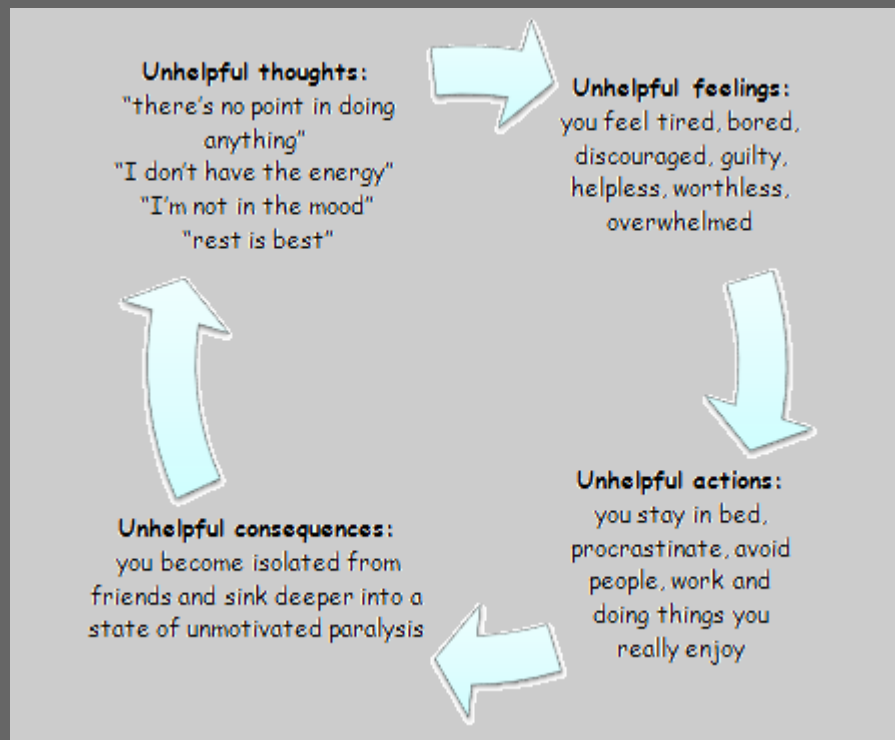


It's surprising how these things can add up!

Or you might find that you have become quite lethargic and you don't do very much at all.

OVERCOMING LETHARGY

Lethargy Cycle



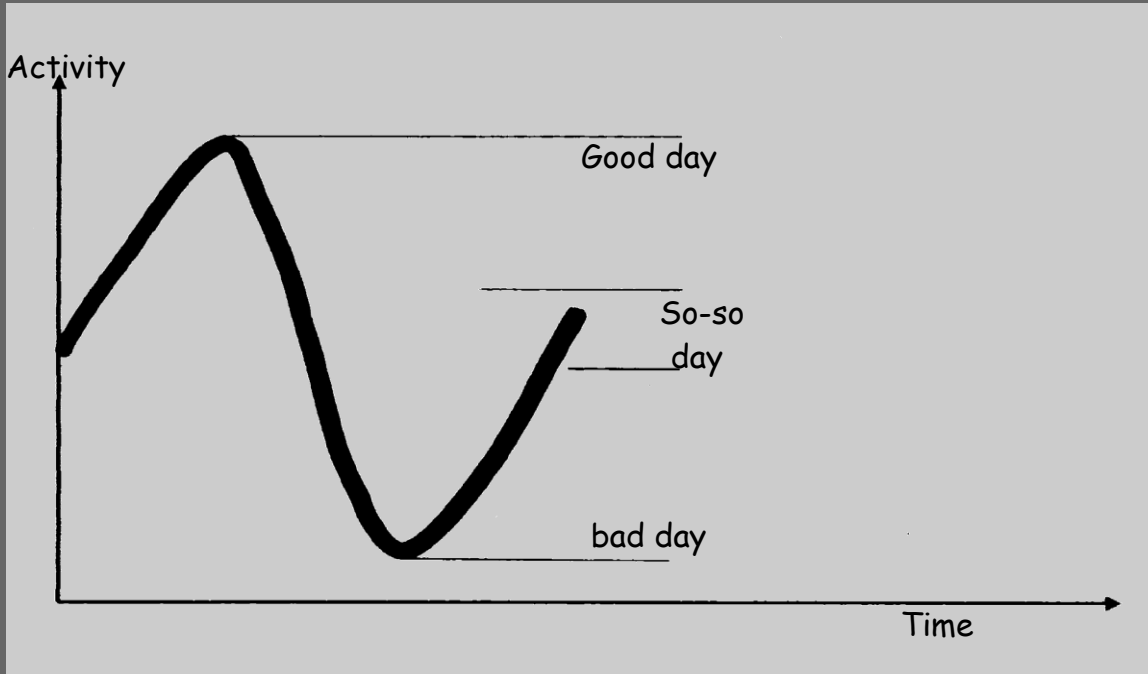
Pacing yourself

means working out what you can tolerate on

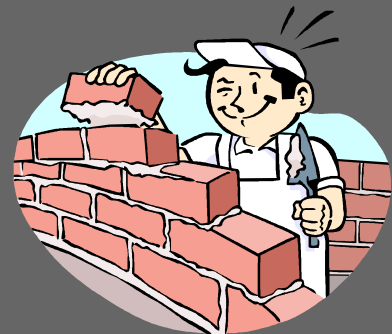
so-so days

(in between a good day and a bad day)

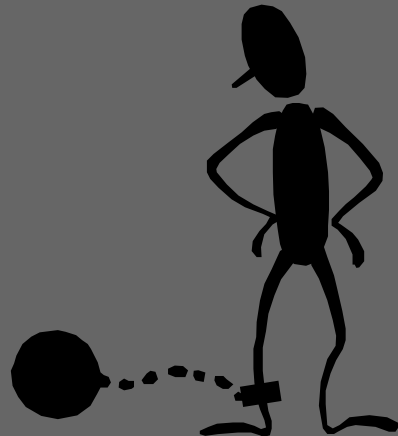
and sticking to this level of activity even on good days.



This is your **BASELINE**.....



It means doing about the same amount of physical and mental activity each day and moderating emotional demands on your energy even if you feel you could do more.



Once you start pacing,
working with a baseline becomes a habit.
Then, you can consider increasing your
activity levels.

Here are some ideas you might like to
try.

Consider getting off the bus
one stop short of your destination
and walking the rest of the way.



How about taking the stairs in a department store
instead of the lift or escalator
or walking to the corner shop
instead of taking the car.



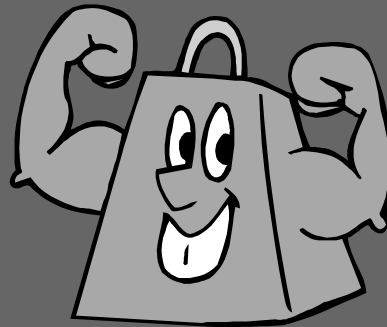
EXERCISE

Formal exercise makes it easier to become more active. You will become stronger, have more energy and stamina, have fewer aches and pains, and feel more like doing something.

There are three main types of exercise.
You could call these the "three S's"

STRENGTH

A stronger upper body makes it easier to carry the shopping. Stronger legs make it easier to walk, to climb stairs or to get out of a chair. As you gain strength, your posture will improve and the strain on joints and muscles will be reduced.



STAMINA

As stamina increases, it will take more to get you breathless and your muscles won't tire as quickly. You'll be able to keep going for longer and you'll have more energy.

SUPPLENESS

Unfortunately, as we get older we tend to stiffen up, but flexibility exercises can help. Many young people are stiffer than the more mature person who works to maintain or even increase their flexibility.

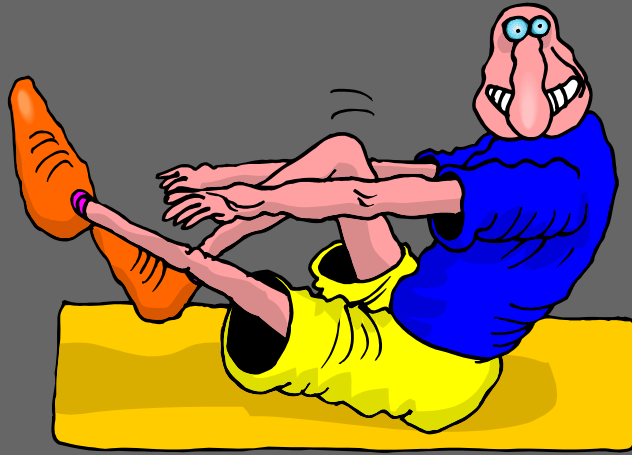


If you are supple you will find it easier to:-

Pick things off the floor
Reach up to a shelf

Put on your shoes or jacket
Get out of a chair

You will also improve your posture, balance and co-ordination.



What kind of
exercise
do we need to do
to improve on the
three S's?



STRENGTH

Any kind of exercise which provides resistance will build up strength in your muscles.

However, it is specific.

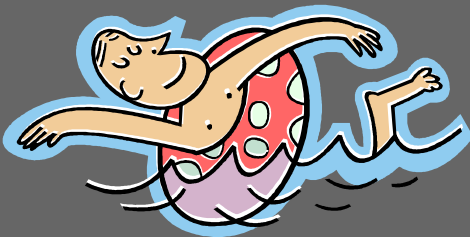
- If you want stronger legs, you must work your legs.
- If you want stronger arms or upper body, you must work the muscles in those areas.

Resistance comes in many forms:-

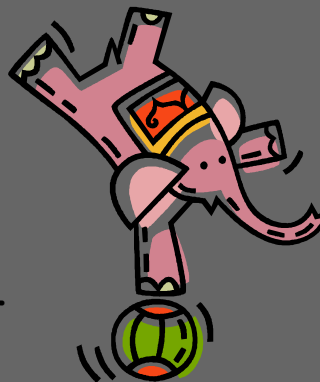
DUMB-BELLS



WATER



GRAVITY



and

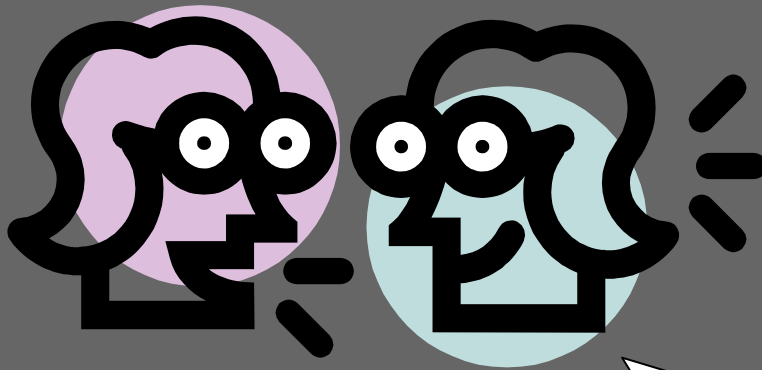
BODY WEIGHT

For instance, you can work your legs using the effect of gravity and your own body weight just by standing up and sitting down a few times!

STAMINA

(another word for endurance – the ability to keep going)

Any kind of exercise which makes you breathe faster whilst still able to talk is called "aerobic".



This will exercise your heart and lungs, enabling your muscles to use oxygen more efficiently to fuel your activities!

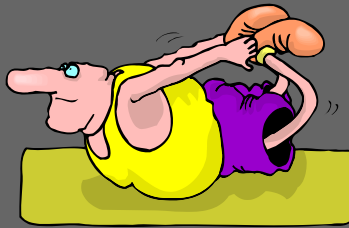
It will also help protect you against heart disease!

Aerobic exercise includes walking, swimming, cycling, and climbing stairs.

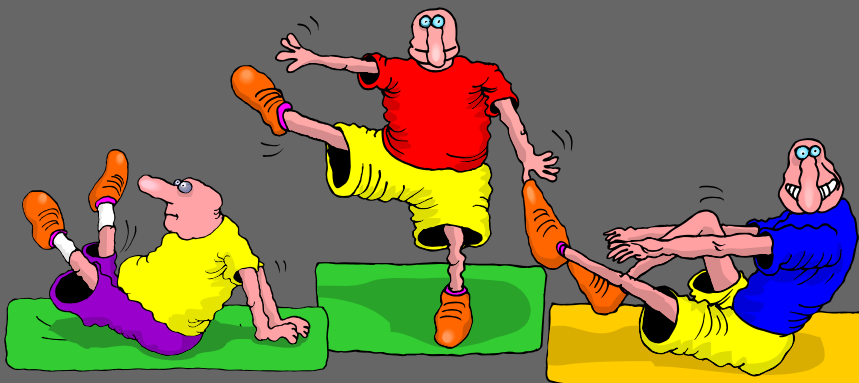


SUPPLENESS

The kind of exercise you need to do to improve your flexibility is stretching

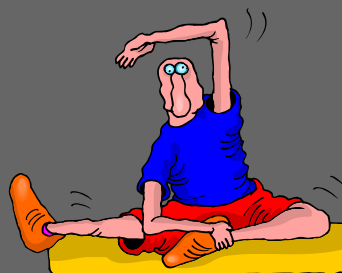


..... and working through a full range of movement.



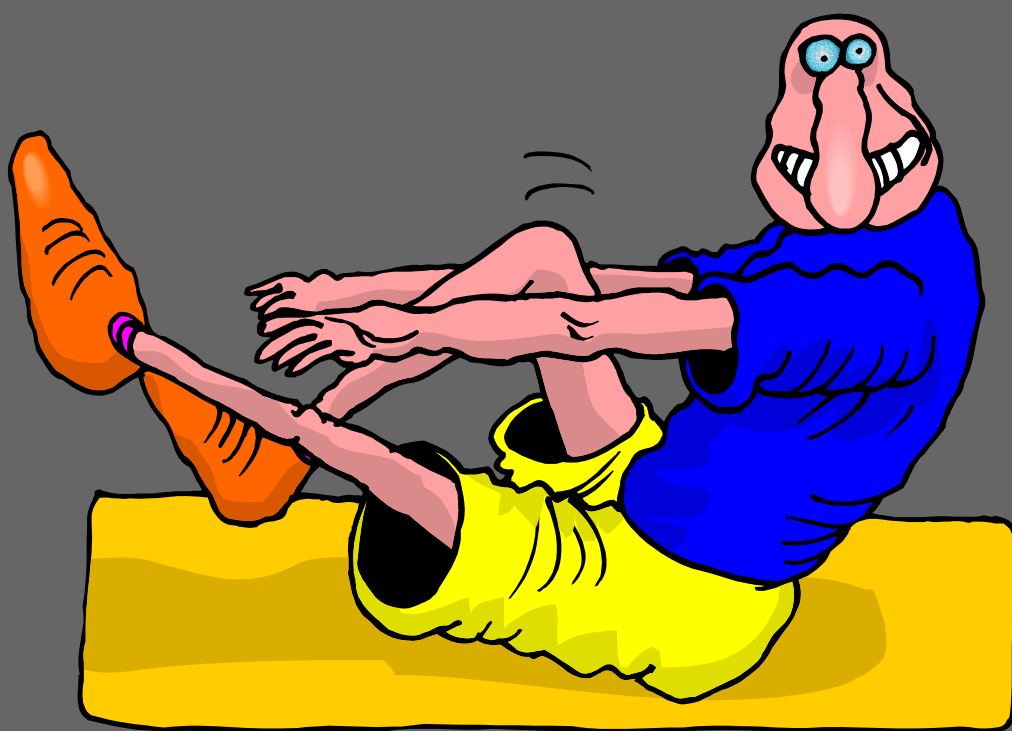
Like strength exercises, these are specific to the areas worked.

The best time to stretch your muscles is when they are still warm and pliable after exercise.



Yoga's good!

Stretch smoothly until you feel a mild tension in the muscles. Forced, jerky movements are less effective and may well earn you an injury!



HOW TO GET FITTA

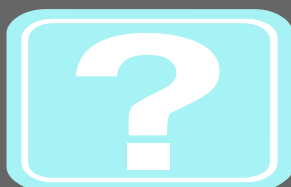
Some of the questions you might be asking are –

How often do I need to exercise?

How hard should I work?

How long should I spend exercising?

What kind of exercise should I do?



Fitness is a vague term.

It covers the three **S**'s of strength, stamina and suppleness,
and is different from Health.

There are, of course, certain health benefits to be attained through exercise,
as we discussed before.

Here is a framework for devising an effective exercise programme for yourself.

F Frequency (how often)



I Intensity (how hard)



T Time (how long)



T Type of exercise (**s**trength, **s**tamina or **s**uppleness)

A Adherence (for it to work, you have to do it regularly)



LET'S SAY YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR STAMINA

Frequency 4 – 6 times a week



Intensity Moderate (heart rate goes up, and breathing becomes heavier - but you can still talk or sing although it might be a little uncomfortable)
(You will also feel quite warm.)



Time Build up to about 30 minutes or more a session. However, start at a level that suits you. It may only be five minutes to start with, but you can build up slowly over a period of time.



Type Aerobic activities such as walking, swimming and cycling.
(activities that use larger muscles so that the body demands more oxygen)



Adherence You are only as fit as the last time you exercised. Even a top athlete will become unfit if they stop exercising regularly.



Smaller amounts of regular exercise will be of more benefit than the occasional hefty session !!

PROGRESSION

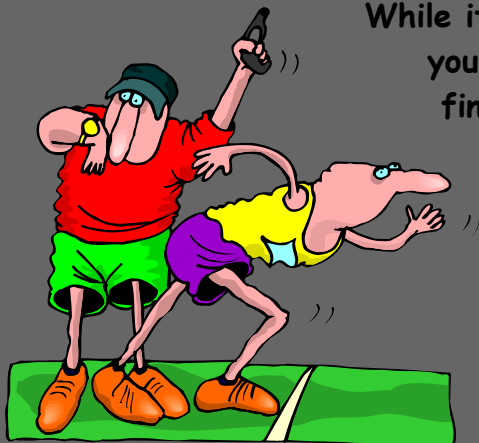
In order for exercise to have an impact on the body, you need to work it a little harder than you do during normal activities.

Your body is only as fit as the demands you put on it. If you regularly increase the demands the body will adapt to enable you to carry out those demands.



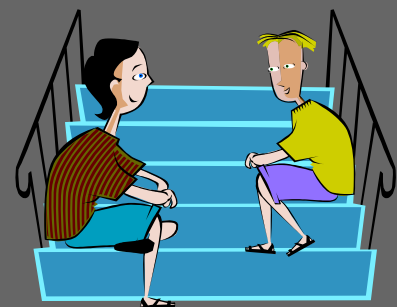
(If on the other hand you do less, the demands decrease and your fitness level drops.)

THE STARTING LINE



While it is necessary to increase the demands you put on your body to improve your fitness levels, you need to find out what is a suitable level for you to start at.

Once you have established your starting level, you can increase your exercise by small steps which will lead you steadily towards your goal.



Start easy.
Find a level that is comfortable for you.

YOUR BASELINE

(FINDING A LEVEL TO START AT)



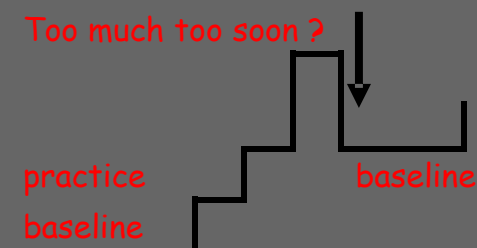
If for instance you are setting out on strength or suppleness exercises, you could decide to start with 5 exercises and repeat them 2, 3, or 4 times. Don't worry if you think this is too easy. It is better to under-do it than to over-do it at the start.

5 x 2



If you feel ok over the next day or two, you will know that you haven't worked too hard and you will be able to increase your levels gently next time - eg 6 exercises, or 5 times.

Too Much too Soon?



If at any time during your exercise progressions you feel exhausted or in pain you will know you have overdone it. Next time, reduce what you do until you find a level your body can cope with easily.

Coping with some aches and pains

You may feel a bit achy.
This is quite normal
when you start waking up muscles that have been sleeping!



If you are working on improving your stamina
and have decided to follow a walking programme,
start with a walk you know you can do quite comfortably.

Walk fast enough so that
you breathe
a bit harder.....



..... But are still able to talk comfortably.

This might be 5 minutes or a measured distance.



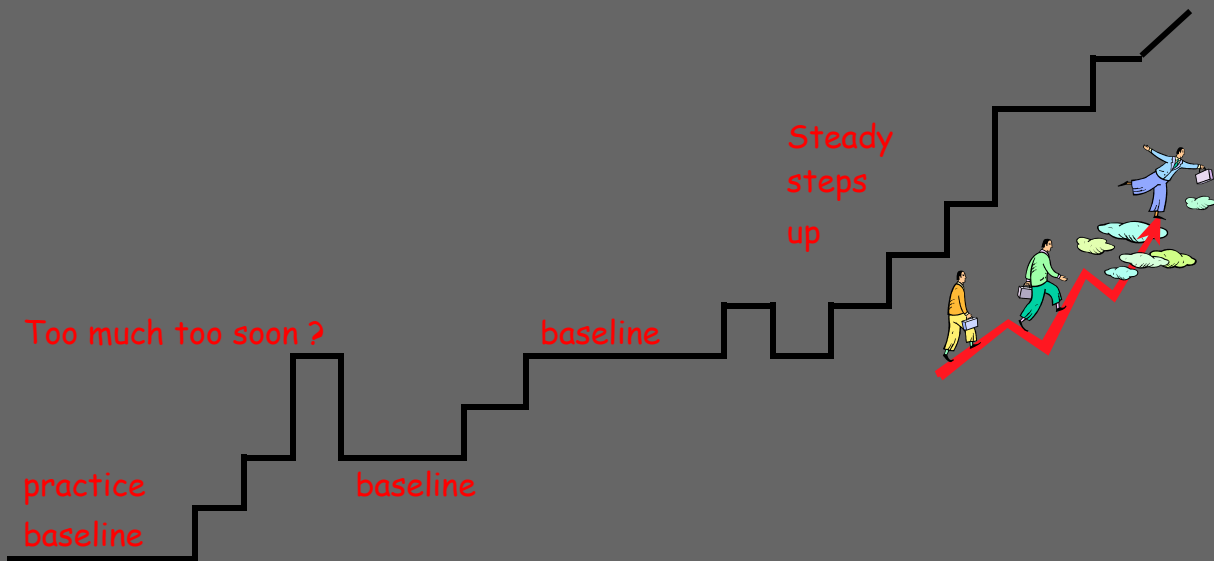
Follow the principles of pacing
as discussed previously
by gradually increasing
the distance or time you are walking.

If the level you start at
proves to be too much -
reduce it a bit



Keep a diary and you will soon be able to look back and see just how much
progress you have made!

Graded activity - What to expect



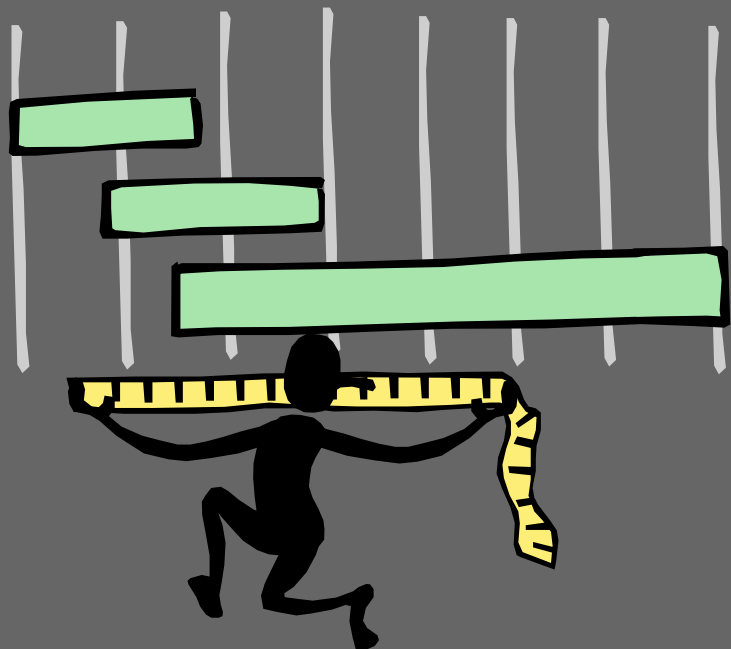
Start easy

Increase gradually

Find your baseline

Pull back if you overdo it

As your fitness levels gradually improve
you will find your baseline moves up.



FALLING BY THE WAYSIDE

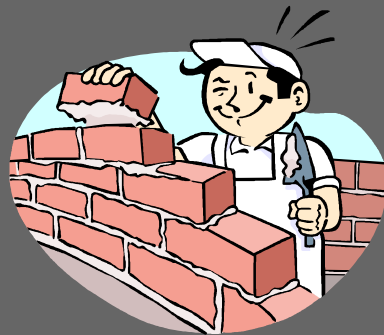
There will be times when you stop exercising for a while - the most common ones being through illness, fatigue, pain or simply going away on holiday.



Some exercise such as walking or swimming may fit easily into your holiday plans.

What happens if you have fallen off the wagon for a while?

Your fitness level may well have dropped a little so remember when you start again that it will be hard to start up where you left off.



Pull back a little and build up again slowly.

It won't take you long because unless you have stopped for a very long time you will still be fitter than when you first started out.



The overall trend will still be upwards.

