

# Managing MS: Keeping Active & Managing Fatigue

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# Overview

- **Physiotherapy Assessment**
- **Movement & what is important**
- **Fatigue & energy management**
- **Exercise & activity**
- **Self-management strategies**
- **Accessing physiotherapy**

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# Physiotherapy Assessment

## Why?

Gain an insight into any problems you may be having, how you perceive them and how physiotherapy can be of benefit.

Ask you what your aims are and set some meaningful goals together – these may be broken down into short and long term goals.

Assess your movement and abilities

Formulate an effective treatment regime, give advice, signpost you to other disciplines or self help groups

Aim to make you be able move as efficiently and effectively as possible

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# Movement depends on.....

- **Normal tone**
- **Strength**
- **Sensation**
- **Coordination**
- **Balance**
- **Good posture**
- **Functioning musculoskeletal system**
- **Purpose**

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# Fatigue

Fatigue is often the biggest barrier to doing physical exercise and completing Activities of Daily Living

Two main aspects of fatigue:

1. Lassitude – extreme tiredness not necessarily related to doing anything. Often interpreted as laziness or lack of motivation
2. Fatigue ability – extreme tiredness following activity, can be caused by physical or mental exertion or by psychological factors

Any difficulties that you may have will be amplified when you're fatigued (fatigue ability) e.g. balance, concentration, emotional regulation

# Fatigue

The causes of fatigue are not clear. Possible explanations include:

- Disruption to brain stem and hypothalamus (controls consciousness, wakefulness and the rhythm of sleeping).
- Inflammation of the nerves in the brain disrupting information processing and memory.
- A decline in physical fitness (deconditioning)
- Exacerbated by poor energy management/routine

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# Energy Management

- When you experience fatigue of any description, you will find all aspects of fatigue management are very difficult.
- People report they live in a 'fog'.
- Routine and structure can remove this cognitive load, and will also help memory and help you start doing things.
- In that routine and structure, you should build good things that help you work with this fatigue such as graded exercise and relaxation.
- There should be consideration regarding sleep; sleep in the afternoon, sleep hygiene.
- Don't fight fatigue...work with it!

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# Energy Management

- Planning: Plan ahead to be more efficient, fit tasks into a routine to increase structure and write a list. Include regular rests/relaxation
- Prioritising: Do the most important things first.....it doesn't matter if the less important things don't get done!
- Delegating: Ask for help when you need it
- Energy effectiveness strategies: Use of equipment, good ergonomics & posture, organise the environment around you and consider what is a good use of the energy that you have?
- Pacing activity: Can the task be broken down into smaller components?
- Graded exercise...

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# Graded Exercise

- People with pain or fatigue often fear that exercise will cause more problems.
- This can lead to a reduction in exercise and a decline in physical fitness.
- Regular stretching and exercise increases muscle strength, decreases pain, fatigue and discomfort and prepares the body for activity.

**Remember to start slowly and build up or increase your level of activity**

**GRADUALLY**

Periods of rest as required

- Can all be discussed with a Physiotherapist

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# Tailoring Exercise/activity

- To individual situations
- E.g. balance work in sitting or standing/posture practice/sit-to-stand
- Find an activity & progress this e.g. with increased time/repetitions/factors
- Ensure you are safe e.g. with balance work, make sure you have support nearby/supervision
- Any ideas to increase your activity?

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# Increasing Activity

- Try to find your baseline level of activity – to complete every day. Build up gradually from there
- Try to avoid: Over activity/inactivity cycle – doing too much on the good days!
- Quality of movement versus quantity
- Explore and experiment to find tasks you can do
- Practice – there's no such thing as failing when you're practising. This gives you an opportunity to learn.
- Be realistic. Work with your friends/family to find new skills or adopt new roles. Routine & enjoyment are important!

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# Self Management

## Maintaining a good level of general activity

- Inactivity can lead to secondary weakness (from disuse) in addition to primary weakness (from the MS)
- Walking – for exercise and Vitamin D, not just ‘A to B’
- Gym / cardiovascular work
- Pilates to maintain good core strength throughout
- Yoga? Swimming?
- Functional tasks e.g. cleaning, gardening

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## Self Management - summary

- Regular exercises to address specific areas of concern
- Stretches – for tight muscles / areas of increased tone
- Strengthening
- Balance retraining
- Fatigue management strategies
- Recognising limitations and NOT over-exercising / working in attempt to push through pain / tiredness

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# Accessing Physiotherapy

## **When to access?**

- Newly Diagnosed with MS
- If experiencing a relapse
- If your ability to function within a role has changed or is becoming more difficult
- Following a fall or injury
- Following Botox injection (for tone management)
- If you need advice/review of your current regime

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# Accessing Physiotherapy

## Who to access?

- Neurological Outpatient Physiotherapy at RBH
- CBNRT – for input requiring one or more discipline (physio, OT, neuro-psychology, speech & language therapy)
- MS Therapy Centre (Reading) for on-going regular exercise groups and social support.
- MSK Physiotherapy (outpatients) – for pain/specific joint issues
- Domiciliary Physiotherapy - for general mobility/pain issues – if someone is unable to access a clinic

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# Accessing Physiotherapy

## How to access?

- Via GP
- Via MS Nurse
- Via Consultant

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# Thank you



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