



Be Pain Smart – Physical activity

Getting out and about

Creating a plan before you leave the house is a key step to getting more active and managing your pain.

Getting out of the house and travelling in your community can be hard when you have a brain injury and chronic pain. You might struggle with:

- getting in and out of the car
- remembering how to get to places
- sitting for too long
- getting tired easily.

Over time, you can lose your confidence and feel unsafe leaving the house for too long. Making a clear plan before you head out is a key step to getting more active, feeling more confident and managing your pain. Check out the common problems below and the solutions to help you get out and about more.



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COMMON DIFFICULTY

SOLUTION FOR YOU

Sitting for too long

To get to most places, you need to sit down in a car, bus or train but you might not be able to stay seated for the whole trip without increasing your pain.



- Plan for rest breaks:
 - Leave with extra time to get there and stop after a set time. Get out of the car and stretch or change positions in your seat.
 - Take turns driving. If you are still able to drive and have someone to drive with you, set a time to stop and take turns driving. This helps you to change position and move around.
 - Store comfortable cushions at the front door or in your car to stay comfortable for longer.
- Take the bus or train:
 - Depending on your local public transport, this option allows you to move around more freely and to stand up (if safe) when you need to.

Cannot sit comfortably when you get there

When you go out, often the seats are not comfortable and you cannot sit for long.



- Take a cushion or heat pack with you.
- Pace yourself and change positions often before the pain gets worse.
- Go for a walk or move around.

No seats available



- Contact the place before you go to ask if there is seating available nearby.



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COMMON DIFFICULTY

When you go out, seating is not always available



SOLUTION FOR YOU

- Take a foldable seat with you.
- Pace yourself, change positions often before the pain gets worse.
- Go for a walk or move around.

Getting lost easily

You might go out for an appointment or to meet a friend and end up lost.



- Make a plan. Before you head out, figure out:
 - where – get the right address and directions
 - what – think about what you are doing and what you need to take with you?
 - when – confirm the time and date
 - who – think about who will come with you or who you are going to meet?
 - how – consider how you will get there, will you drive, take a taxi or public transport?
 - a plan and keep it with you.
- Have a contact list in your phone or wallet of people you can call to help.
- Put a reminder in your phone or diary about what you are going to do.
- Practice travelling to where you need to go. If you are going somewhere new or unfamiliar, it can help to do a trial run a day or two before.
- Take someone with you. Two heads are better than one! Ask a family member, friend or carer to come with you.



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COMMON DIFFICULTY

Getting in and out of the car

This can be hard when your movements are limited and certain positions make your pain worse.



SOLUTION FOR YOU

- Getting in the car:

Step 1. Start with your back to the car, hold on to the sides to support yourself and lower your bottom down slowly onto the seat

Step 2. Swing your body around slowly and slide your feet in (or you may need to lift in your feet).

- Getting out of the car:

Step 1. Swing your feet out of the door

Step 2. Place your feet firmly on the ground, slightly apart

Step 3. Hold on to the sides for support

Step 4. Slowly stand up.

- Take your time! It is not a race and it is better to do it safely.
- A physiotherapist or exercise physiologist can give you exercises to help you build your strength and balance.



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COMMON DIFFICULTY

Not able to drive

There are many reasons why you might not be able to drive anymore, but this does not need to stop you from getting out and about in your community.



SOLUTION FOR YOU

- Use public transport – find out what your local public transport options are.
- Book an Uber or taxi.
- Ask a family member, friend or carer to drive you.
- Look into free or cheap transport options provided by your local hospital or your community:
 - If you have an appointment at a local hospital, some hospitals provide a free transport service. Contact the hospital to ask if this is available and if you meet the criteria.
 - Some councils also provide free or cheap transport to popular places, such as the local shopping centre or parks. Contact your local council to learn more.

Getting tired easily

It can take a lot of time and energy to get out and about, especially if you add in extra rest breaks or use public transport.



- Pace yourself, take your time and plan rest breaks.
- Look at the tools and tips in the '[Fatigue](#)' brick to help you make a plan.

If you still need help or support with this, contact an experienced occupational therapist for guidance.



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My plan for getting out and about

Now it is time to take these tips and make them work for you. Think of the problems that stop you from getting out and about, then figure out what solutions would work for you. Here is an example.

COMMON DIFFICULTY	SOLUTION FOR YOU
<i>I often go to the shops and forget why I am there or what I need to get.</i>	<i>I will write a shopping list and make a plan about which shops I need to visit.</i> <i>I will keep the plan in my phone.</i>
<i>By the time I get to the doctors, my pain is worse from sitting in the car.</i>	<i>I will ask my sister to drive me and stop halfway there to get out of the car and change positions.</i> <i>I will take my cushion with me in the car and into the appointment.</i>
<i>Getting into the car.</i>	<i>I will take my time and not rush. I will put my bottom and back in first and then move my legs one at a time.</i> <i>I will do the exercises my physio gave me to strengthen my legs.</i>



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Now it is your turn to have a go. In the first column, write down your common problems or difficulties that keep coming up each day. In the second column, write down the solutions that work for you from the tips above.

COMMON DIFFICULTY

SOLUTION FOR YOU

