



Be Pain Smart – Physical activity

Getting more active

Moving and getting more active is key to managing your pain.

Generally, the human body moves easily and enjoys movement; and exercise helps with sleep, keeping healthy, managing mood and overall wellbeing. It is important to move our body on a regular basis. Often, after having a brain injury or chronic pain, your body might not be able to move in the ways it did before.

After an injury to the brain, it is common to have physical difficulties, such as:

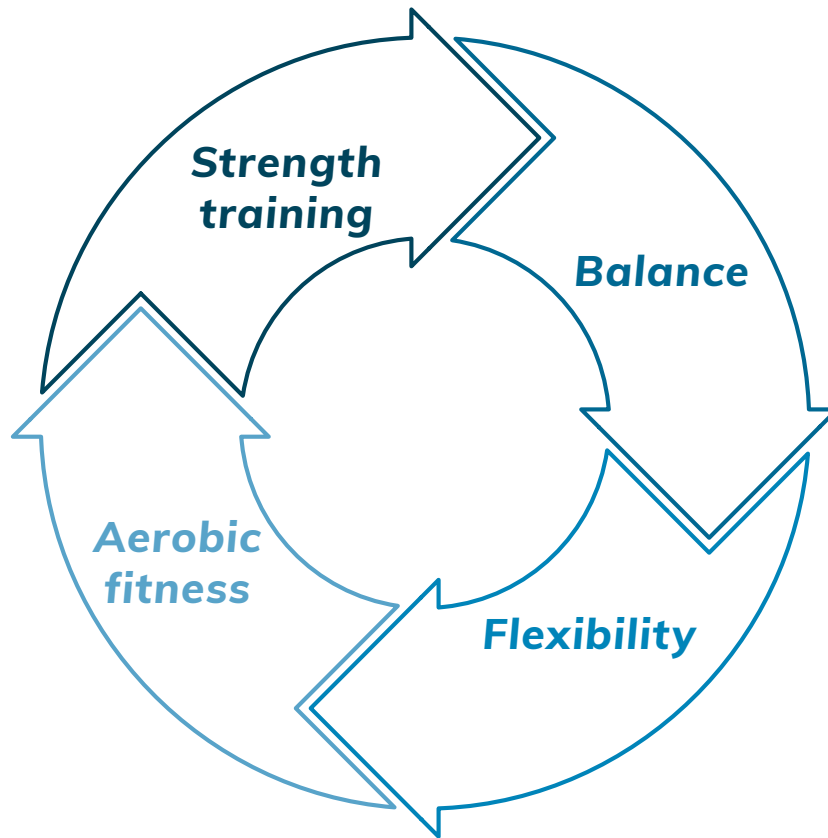
- muscle weakness
- reduced muscle length, sometimes called contractures
- reduced muscle tone
- reduced coordination
- other problems, including ataxia, apraxia, involuntary movements or tremors.

Often, people with a brain injury might have extended periods of time with reduced activity or limited mobility. This could be during time in hospital or because of chronic pain. It is common for people with chronic pain to reduce their activity and rest, thinking this will help to stop their pain. The more you rest, the harder it becomes to do activity. Even the simplest task becomes an effort. Rest and inactivity, plus any physical injuries can lead to deconditioning. Deconditioning is when the body has reduced fitness or muscle weakness due to inactivity.

It is important to work with a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist with experience in brain injury to develop a movement program that is safe and effective for you. You might have worked with a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist before. Their role is to help you re-learn activities, such as walking or getting out of bed, assisting you to improve your fitness and strength, and helping you to get back to activities within your community. When putting this movement program together, keep in mind that it should focus on **strength training, aerobic fitness, flexibility** and **balance**.



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Moving and getting more active is key to managing your pain. When planning your program, start off by picking an activity you enjoy. Begin slowly and increase your activity level and strength over time. Think about:

- what type of activity do you want to do?
- how often?
- how hard or long to do it?
- [‘goal setting’](#)
- [pace](#), pace, pace.



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Here are some activity ideas to get you started.

Strength training

- Lifting weights
- Climbing stairs
- Carrying groceries
- Resistance exercises

Balance

- Exercises, such as leg or heel raises
- Yoga
- Gym balls

Flexibility

- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Stretches

Aerobic fitness

- Walking
- Golf
- Swimming
- Dancing
- Water aerobics

Remember, two heads are better than one. Talk to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist to see what exercises could be good for you; or talk with your family, friends or a carer to see how they can support you to get moving.



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Plan a movement program

Start by thinking of one activity you could start or do more of, then make a plan.

What type of activity do you want to do?

I would like to walk to the shops.

How often will you do this?

I will walk to the shops every second day.

How hard or long will you do this for?

At first, I will take a break on the way to and from the shops. After a few weeks, I will try to shorten the breaks.

Now it is your turn to have a go at planning your movement program. Talk to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist, your family or carers, or just have a try yourself.



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Start by thinking of one activity you could start or do more of, then make a plan. Write it down below.

My movement plan

What type of activity do you want to do?

How often will you do this?

How hard or long will you do this for?

Check out the '[Goal setting](#)' and '[Pacing](#)' sections on the website to help you with your plan.