

Being proactive about your pain

There's overwhelming evidence that the best treatments to prevent and overcome persistent pain involve planning ahead, taking control and having a long-term approach.



Evidence also tells us that if we wait for things to happen and spend all our time reacting to things, then we'll gradually experience increasing disability and pain. So being proactive is best.

Proactive can also mean 'we are for active things' – actively rethinking pain, actively trying new approaches and retraining the pain system and body. Broadly speaking, this means doing things ourselves rather than having things done to us.

Active strategies include things that are empowering and enabling, developing your confidence, belief and

knowledge so you can take charge. When you do this, you enable your recovery.

A passive strategy might be taking medications, resting up or seeing a physio every few days when the pain gets too much. And while they can provide temporary relief, we now know the better approach is to use active strategies every day, which can help to reduce or prevent the pain flare-ups.



Thanks to pain science, we now know that:

- Active strategies are better than passive ones at retraining the pain system and body over time
- Active strategies can include learning about pain so it's not seen as a threat

- Active strategies can be physical, like moving a little more each day
- Active strategies can work on thoughts and emotions, like mindfulness, meditation, relaxation training, yoga, dancing or socialising
- Planning ahead and preparing your body, mind and brain for any setbacks can make getting over them much easier

Over time, drawing on your own experiences and working with your health professional, you'll learn which active strategies are best for you. Be proactive and feel the benefits!

This fact sheet is not specific medical advice. But we really hope that, once you've read it, you'll understand more about pain and the latest ways of managing it

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This fact sheet has been adapted from its original format for accessibility purposes. Please see <https://www.painrevolution.org/painfacts> for the original fact sheet in multiple languages.

Adapted by a [Canadian] occupational therapist working
with people in chronic pain.