

## Persistent Pain Management Series

### Your guide to exercising

#### Why should I exercise?

In order to cope with your persistent pain, you may change the way you do things to try and stop pain or avoid making it worse. This makes logical sense, however, you may find that despite doing this your pain gets worse and you can do less and less. This is why exercise plays an important role.

Learning how to control your nervous system's response to different situations, movements or even thoughts can help manage persistent pain.

It is important to practice the skill of holistic awareness (taking note of what is going on in the whole of your body) to understand what is going on in your body. Exercise is a good way to develop this skill and increase your physical functioning.

#### Exercising with persistent pain

Exercise helps to retrain your nervous system, improves the condition of your muscles, joints and nerves and can help to reduce stress. Exercise can make you feel more relaxed and confident in how you move or perform an activity.

#### Benefits of exercise

Your body is designed to move and is beneficial to all parts of your body, including your brain.

The benefits of exercise may include:

- stronger bones and joints
- improvement in coordination and balance
- better sleep and positive mood
- better weight management
- more confidence and sense of wellbeing
- reduced risk or prevention of diabetes and easier management of diabetes mellitus type 2
- lower risk of cardiovascular disease, including stroke by managing cholesterol and blood pressure
- decreased risk of bowel cancer
- improvement in mental health, especially in managing depression and anxiety.



## Ready to start?

The most important things to do are to set realistic and achievable goals, and to choose and engage in exercise you enjoy.

Have fun, do not plan to go swimming if you don't like pools. Your Community Support Team can help you to get started (refer to the *Your Community Support Team* fact sheet).

It may be helpful to follow these tips when starting to exercise with persistent pain:

- start at a safe and appropriate level for your ability (see the *Your guide to goal setting and pacing* fact sheet for tips)
- progress your activity in a planned, calculated and paced way
- do not give up if you have a flare up of your pain.

### Before commencing exercise

Check with your general practitioner if you have any medical conditions that may require review.

If you are already doing exercise then aim to gently increase it with the understanding you are now more concerned with managing your 'alarm system' response than the tissues. Try using the pacing technique to help with this (refer to the *Your guide to goal setting and pacing* fact sheet).



THE HANSENS WERE REALISTIC AND  
DIDN'T SET THE BAR TOO HIGH

### Notes

#### Example: my goals for exercise