

Returning to Physical Activity following COVID-19

Why is Physical Activity Important?

To help your recovery from COVID-19, you should return to physical activity when you feel ready to do so. This will help to improve your fitness, and address the deconditioning that will have occurred whilst you've been unwell and doing less. Returning to physical activity will need to be a slow process as your level of fitness may have reduced and you may be suffering with post-viral fatigue.

General Recommendations:

Make sure you are well enough

Are the doctors happy for you to exercise? If you are still awaiting medical investigations or under treatment for any other health-related issues, please seek advice for your doctor/GP.

What is exercise?

Remember that during your recovery, everyday activities may count as exercise. This may be enough initially whilst you manage your fatigue.

Take it slowly

Pace yourself and take things steady. It might feel like you're taking baby steps at first but do not rush to regain your fitness. A gentle walk may be enough to begin with. Monitor your body's response and level of fatigue immediately after exercises and a few days afterwards.

Listen to your body

If you begin to feel unwell again or you felt completely wiped out by the activity you did ensure that you rest. When you feel able again reduce the activity intensity (even less than you think you should) and try again.

Rest and recover

Your body has been busy healing itself from illness, it is important to allow time for rest so your body can restore/recover from the activity carried out.

Exercise Recommendations

When you feel ready (fatigue is manageable with current level of activity) try two minutes of gentle exercise (e.g. a faster paced walk or simple and slow body-weight exercises) and then rest until you feel your breathing and heart rate have completely recovered. Repeat this cycle as you feel able to whilst monitoring your fatigue immediately and in the following days.

Measuring your effort levels

- Monitoring the intensity of your exercise may be a useful way to ensure you are pacing yourself and gradually building your exercise tolerance.
- The Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) scale is a common tool used to assess training intensity. Score your level of exertion from 1 to 10 and aim to remain at a level of 4-6 (moderate activity)

RPE Scale (Rate of Perceived Exertion)	
1	Very Light Activity (<i>anything other than complete rest</i>)
2-3	Light Activity (<i>feels like you can maintain for hours, easy to breath and carry on a conversation</i>)
4-6	Moderate Activity (<i>feels comfortable, and you are able to talk and hold short conversations</i>)
7-9	Vigorous Activity (<i>on the verge of becoming uncomfortable, short of breath, can speak a sentence</i>)
10	Max Effort (<i>feels impossible to continue, completely out of breath, unable to talk</i>)