

Managing Post COVID-19 Condition Therapeutic Education Program


Fatigue and Pacing

Objectives for session:

- Review exertion and PEM/PESE
- Ways to support daily activities
- Planning for events
- Why did I have a "crash"?
- Group discussion

What is Exertion?

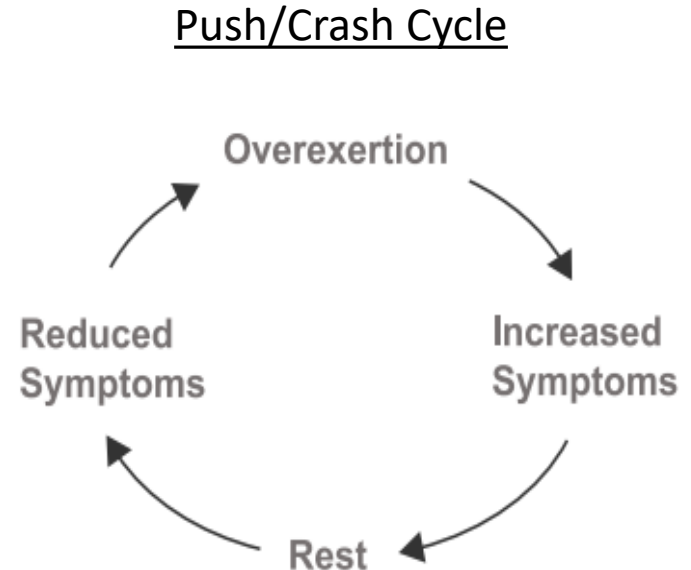
- Anything that stresses/strains your system
- Exertion can be
 - Physical
 - Cognitive
 - Emotional
 - Social
 - Sensory
 - Environmental
 - Hormonal
- All daily tasks are considered exertion, *it's not just exercise.*



"I didn't do anything today."

PEM/PESE: Post Exertional Malaise or Post Exertional Symptom Exacerbation

- Flare up of fatigue/symptoms after exertion
- Happens *after* the exertion/activity (could be 24-72 hrs later)
- When delayed, it's hard to identify which activity may have caused the "crash"
- CDC [defines](#) as "the worsening of symptoms following even minor physical or mental exertion, with symptoms typically worsening 12 to 48 hours after activity and lasting for days or even weeks"



http://www.phsa.ca/health-info-site/Documents/post_covid-19_Post-Exertional_Malaise.pdf

Do I have PEM?

Does it take more than one day to recover from activities?

Yes

Do you feel unwell, weak, not sleep well, or have pain when recovering from an activity?

Yes to at least one

Are you feeling limited in your ability to do your normal tasks after activity?

Yes

Does exercise or activity positively affect you?

No

Do you have problems focusing, thinking or remembering after an activity?

Yes

PEM/PESE and not Deconditioning

PEM/PESE	Deconditioning
Fatigue after activity but can be delayed	Fatigue felt after activity
Symptoms & function are diminished after 24 hrs, can persist more than 1 wk	Symptoms resolve & return to function within 24 hrs
Symptoms: Cognitive dysfunction, decrease in daily function, no positive feelings with exercise, head aches, inflammatory symptoms (G.I., orthostatic, neurologic, etc.)	Symptoms: typically physical fatigue, soreness, does not involve other systems
Does not respond to pushing limits of activity, body does not adapt to exercise	The body will increase strength/endurance by adapting to exercise

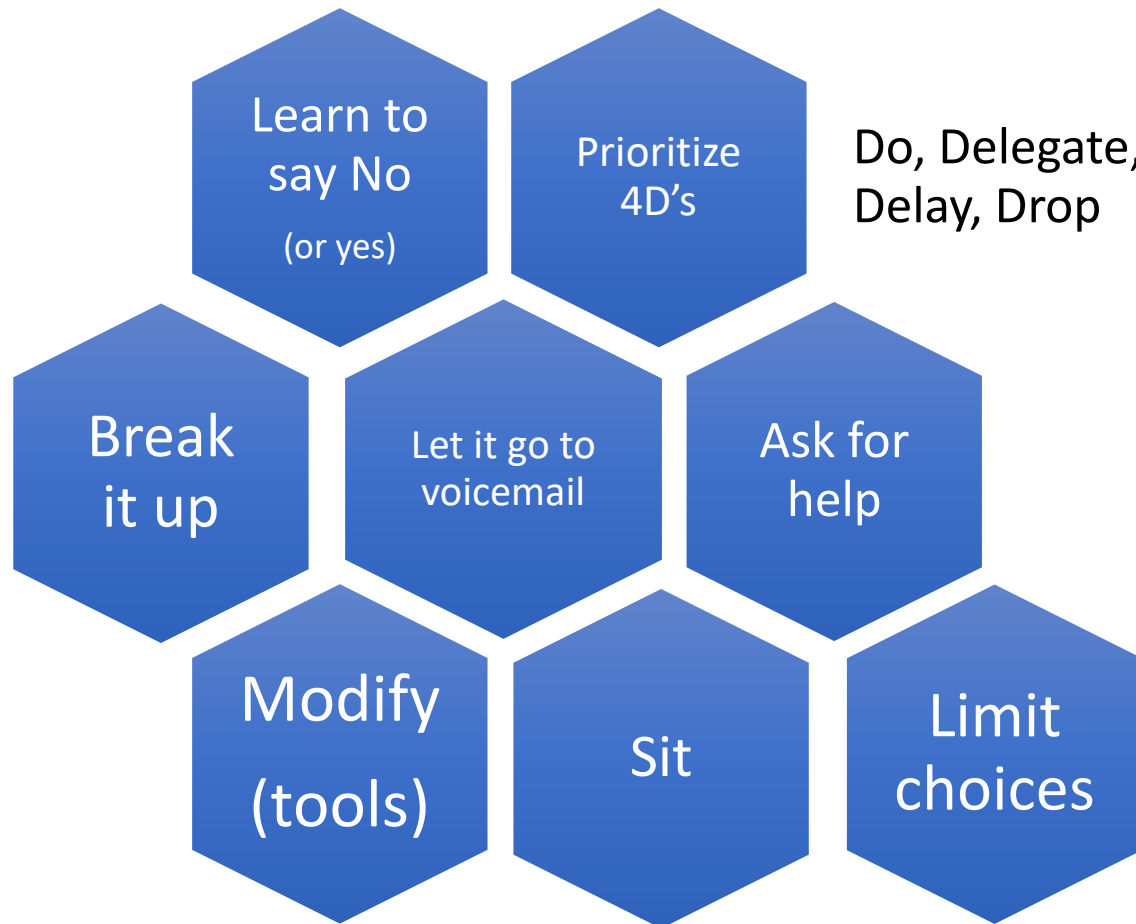
4P's of Energy Conservation

- Plan** Time of day/week, where, how, rests, etc.
- Pace** Stop & rest before fatigue/symptoms
- Prioritize** How important is this for me to do?
- Position** Environment, support your body, decrease effort

What is Pacing?

- Activity management strategy that helps limit the number and severity of relapses and allowing you to do what you can within your limits
- Goal:
 - Minimize the roller coaster experience
 - Stabilize / decrease symptoms
 - Have some consistency
 - Feel better
- Keep the amount of energy used *consistent* across days
- *Resist* taking advantage of good days

Ways to Save Energy



Daily Activities



Self-Care – shower less often, bath chair, electric toothbrush, hair dryer holder, long handled devices



Meals – use a food processor, use a meal plan, simple meal rotation, prepped foods on hand, nutritious snacks, have someone bring a meal, leftovers



Cleaning/Laundry – 1 task/day, limit carrying, long handled devices



Groceries– delivery, carts/wheeled baskets, use a list, plan your way around the store, put away fridge/frozen items first and leave pantry items later



Sleep – develop a routine for going to sleep, wake up at a similar time, associate bed with sleep/sex only, limit screen time 1 hr before bed

Planning for Events

- Reduce activities before to prevent over-exerting
- Length of the event
- Schedule your rest – pre/during/post
- Transportation
- Consider the environment - noise/lights
- Socializing
- Have someone support you
- What makes the event easier?
- “Radical rest” before / after

https://www.meaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Pacing-Guide-Clinicians.FINAL2_.pdf

Why did I "crash"?

- This condition fluctuates and is unpredictable – symptoms can flare up even when you've done your best to plan
- A "crash" or PEM episode does not mean you have failed
- If you get sick from something else, your Long COVID symptoms can flare up
- More stress, worry or other life events can trigger symptoms
- Changes in your body and environment can flare symptoms

Plan for a "crash"

Stop

Rest

Pace

- *Rest is key* for recovery
- Reduce your activities as much as possible
- Talk to your family/friends about what you need or how they can help when you are recovering from PEM
- Keep things close by – snacks, water, phone, medications
- Keep frozen meals options and easy to grab snack on hand
- Limit trips up/down the stairs
- Reschedule appointments if able
- Get someone to drive you places

Monitoring Your Symptoms

- Keep it simple
- Track top 3 symptoms
- Activity Log vs App
- Look for trends over weeks/months

Monitoring symptoms

Activity diary

Tracking your activity, rest and sleep

World PT Day 2021

Date:	Midnight to midday (morning)											Midday to midnight (afternoon/evening)												
	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Monday																								
Tuesday																								
Wednesday																								
Thursday																								
Friday																								
Saturday																								
Sunday																								

Mark each hour box with the color that corresponds to your activity level: sleep, rest, low energy activity, or high energy activity. If you are feeling post-exertional symptom exacerbation/extreme fatigue (crash) mark with an X.

High energy activity (physically, mentally or emotionally demanding)	Rest	Post-exertional symptom exacerbation (PESE)/ extreme fatigue (crash)	www.world.physio/wptday
Low or medium energy activity (activities which are less demanding)	Sleep		

<https://world.physio/sites/default/files/2021-06/WPTD2021-ActivityTracker-Final-v1.pdf>

Monitoring symptoms

visible.

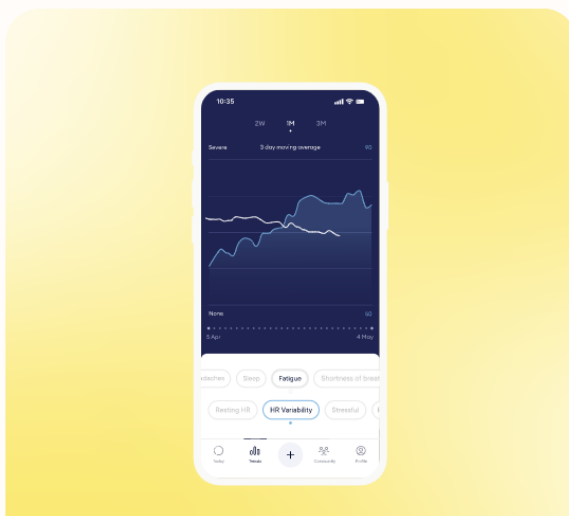
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The Visible app

Our free app is now in open beta.

[Download now](#) →



See trends in your illness.

Check in with your symptoms, exertion and more, in less than one minute.

Use this data to track your long-term progress, and see what makes you better or worse.



<https://www.makevisible.com/>

Resources

Davenport, Todd et al. (2022). *Lessons from Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome for Long COVID: Postexertional Symptoms is an Abnormal Response to Exertion/Activity*. Available: <https://www.jospt.org/doi/10.2519/jospt.blog.20220202/full/>

ME Action. *Pacing and Management Guide for ME/CFS*: https://www.meaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Pacing-and-Management-Guide-for-ME_CFS-9.pdf

ME Action. *Pacing and Management Guide for ME/CFS and Long COVID*: https://www.meaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Pacing-Guide-Clinicians.FINAL2_.pdf

Post-COVID-19 Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network (2022). *Post-Exertional Malaise in Post COVID-19 Recovery and Finding your "Energy Envelope"*: http://www.phsa.ca/health-info-site/Documents/post_covid-19_Post-Exertional_Malaise.pdf

Resources

Visible app: <https://www.makevisible.com/>

World Physiotherapy Activity Tracking Log:

<https://world.physio/sites/default/files/2021-06/WPTD2021-ActivityTracker-Final-v1.pdf>