BOOM-BUST CYCLE

Do you boom-bust?

Many people with long-term pain display a cycle of activity called boom-bust. This is when you push yourself to perform physical activities until the pain becomes so severe it forces you to stop and rest for prolonged periods. The pain improves, you feel better, and the cycle begins again.

While resting and not active, our muscles weaken, and our general fitness declines. Muscles may become unable to support our joints properly, which increases the loading they must bear and the pain we experience.

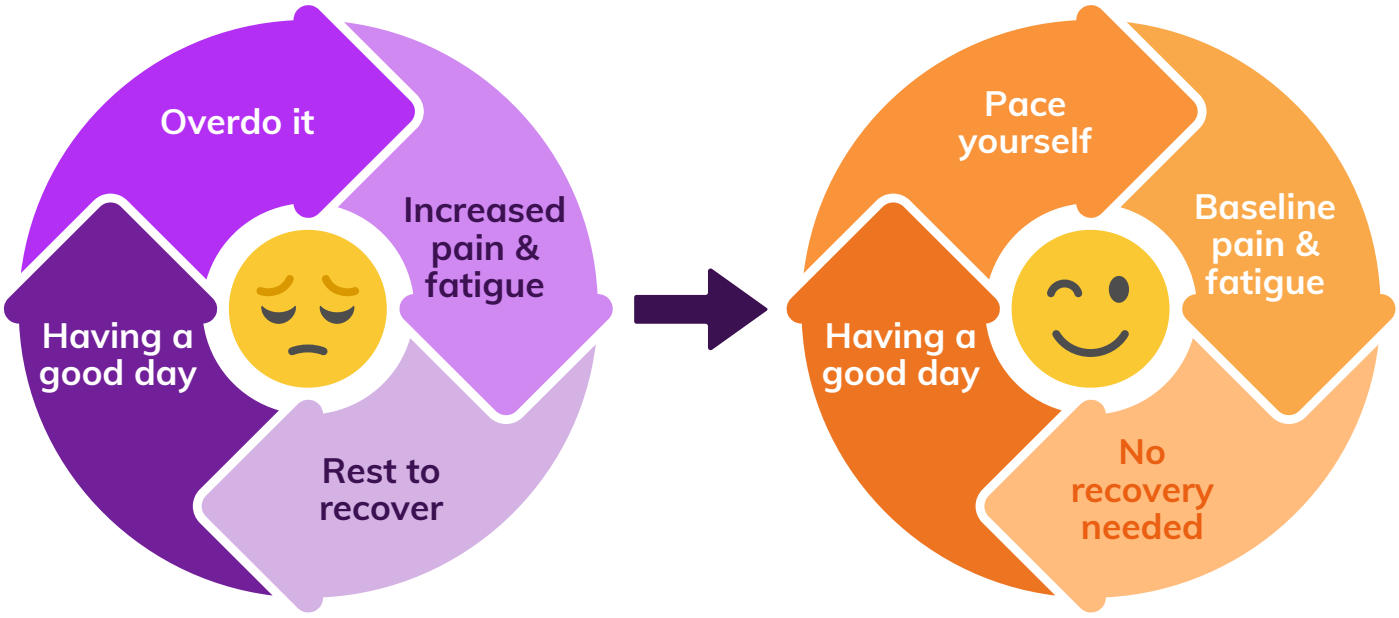
If this **boom-bust** cycle continues, then, over time, we experience more pain and fatigue and less and less ability to do the activities we want and need to do. Our bad days increase in quantity, the time it takes to recover increases, and we feel more stress and anxiety.

Breaking the cycle – learning to pace yourself

You can break the cycle by learning to listen to your body and work within its current capabilities. The aim is to do the **same amount** of physical activity on **good days** as you would **on bad days.** This is called pacing, and it means you will be able to achieve more every day with less pain, exhaustion, and stress as you remove yourself from the **boom-bust** cycle.

Slow and steady wins the race!

Once the cycle breaks, you can slowly increase your exercise and activity levels (always working within your capabilities). As your general fitness increases and your muscles, tendons, and ligaments increase in strength and tone, you will feel better and be able to do more.



Adapted from The Pain Toolkit by Pete Moore

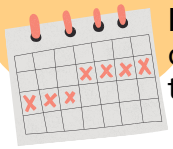
The 4 P's of Joint Protection

Joint Protection is a term used to describe strategies to reduce stress on sore joints. It is about adapting our activities to reduce pain and fatigue.

Pacing

Don't do more on your good days than you would on bad days. Aim to do about the same level of physical activity every day. Stop and rest BEFORE you need to and take frequent breaks to stretch and rest. Alternate between a physically demanding job and an easy job. Become aware of the signals your body sends – are you pacing yourself or doing too much?

Planning



Plan to do an activity the easiest way possible. Divide tasks into small chunks you can spread out over time. Plan your week and your day ahead, and have a plan for the bad days – what will you do on those days to help support yourself?

Prioritising

What is most important? Do these activities first. Set realistic and achievable targets that are within your current capabilities. How will you handle a bad day?

Posture

Become aware of your posture because how you use your body influences your pain level. Change position often so you do not overwork the same muscles during a task. Use your core muscles to support movement when standing. Ask yourself: am I doing this task the best way? Could I change my technique? Would a tool or aid (such as an electric can opener, ergonomic gardening trowel, or twist-top lid opener) reduce strain and pain on small joints? Do you need a stool or chair to conserve energy? Look around at your physical environment – what can you re-arrange to make things easier?

Acceptance as a self-help strategy

Pain may limit some of your actions, but it doesn't have to control your life. Your mind plays an important role in how you feel about pain. Thinking of pain as **a signal to take positive action** can be helpful.

Accepting that you experience persistent pain helps you to move onwards, but it's a process - so be gentle with yourself!

Educate yourself about your condition to identify strategies such as the 4 P's to help you live your best life with arthritis.

To understand more about arthritis pain and how to manage it, contact Arthritis NZ at 0800 663 463, email info@arthritis.org.nz, or visit our website, arthritis.org.nz.