

Fatigue and COVID-19

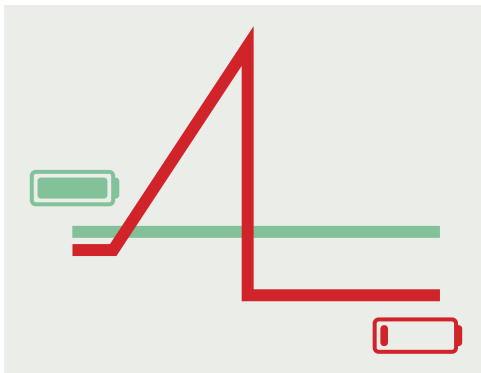
What you need to know

Pacing strategies

Why is pacing important?

Following COVID-19, you may find you have less energy than you did before. Everyday activities, work, and recreational activities that require physical, cognitive (mental), and/or emotional stamina may suddenly be exhausting.

You may also notice that if you “push through” your symptoms, and ignore what your body is telling you, you only feel worse. This can lead to an unhealthy pattern where you “go until you can’t go any more” and then “crash” with worse symptoms than before. This phenomenon is called post-exertional malaise. If this sounds familiar, see the [Post-exertional malaise and COVID-19](#) information sheet.



What is pacing?

Since energy can’t be stored for later use, you need to learn how to manage it on a day-to-day basis. Pacing is a set of strategies that can help you tackle your daily routine with less fatigue.

It can be helpful to think about your energy as money in your bank account. Just like money, you need to budget your energy so it doesn’t run out unexpectedly, and you have enough energy throughout the day, and week, to participate in the activities that are most meaningful and important for you.

How to pace yourself?

Reflect on what activities in your life are “energy boosting” (e.g., quality time with a friend, rest periods) and “energy draining” (e.g., running errands or solving a problem).

Tip:

To help you identify energy-draining activities, here’s a **perceived exertion scale (Borg scale)**, a tool to help you estimate how hard you’re working (your activity intensity).

PERCEPTION DE L'EFFORT	
	0 Rien du tout
	0,5 Très très facile
	1 Très facile
	2 Facile
	3 Moyen
	4 Un peu difficile
	5 Difficile
	6 Plus difficile
	7 Très difficile
	8
	9 Très très difficile
	10 Maximum

Borg scale: Institut universitaire de cardiologie et de pneumologie de Québec:
iucpq.qc.ca/sites/default/files/epe_20200405.pdf

Once you are more clear about your “energy-drainers,” the next step is to be strategic about how you prioritize, plan, and pace these activities.

Prioritize

To help you prioritize, ask yourself the following questions:

- What activities are most important to me?
- What are my expectations, and those of my family and friends?
- Do I need to do these tasks as often as I did before?

Plan

- Make lists to avoid feeling overwhelmed;
- Plan your activities and tasks to get things done as efficiently as possible;
- Schedule in fun activities;
- Schedule in breaks (activity-break-activity-break, etc.);
- Spread your “energy drainers” over the week and do them when you have more energy;
- Invest your energy wisely (in activities that are most important to you);
- Break up a large task by doing a little every day;
- Take time each night to review the day:
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, what was my energy level when I got up this morning?
 - When did I feel most energetic during the day?
 - When did I feel least energetic? - Why do you think this is?
- Afterwards, take time to plan the next day.

Alternate periods of rest and work

- Give yourself enough time to get a good night’s sleep.
- Take breaks before you feel tired (e.g., when your energy hits 3 or 4 out of 10 on the Borg scale. Don’t wait to be in the red zone before stopping, because that will make it harder for you to recover later).

Work efficiently

- Organize your work environment (whether it be your computer desk or your kitchen);
- Adopt a proper work posture;
- Use the right tools for the job;
- Perform tasks sitting down (e.g., peeling vegetables, folding clothes). The seated position requires 25% less energy!

Take action!

If you think pacing is something you could be better at, here are some ideas on how to take action.

1. Identify your activity pattern by recording your daily activities and energy levels for one week; ;
2. Reflect on what you find. Do you have too many “energy drainers” in your day, and not enough “energy boosters”? Are there big fluctuations in your energy ratings day to day and you are falling into the pattern of “over-doing” and “crashing”? (see [Post-exertional malaise and COVID-19 information sheet](#));
3. See if you can use the information you collect to improve your activity pattern the following week and to allow for more stable energy ratings from day to day;
4. Create an action plan. For example, buy a day planner and schedule in your “to do’s”, appointments, and energy boosting activities.

If you need help with pacing, don’t hesitate to talk to your family doctor or an occupational therapist.

Reference:

Post COVID-19 Interdisciplinary Clinical Care Network. (2021, 22 mars). Fatigue in Post COVID-19 Recovery : Pacing. www.phsa.ca/health-info-site/Documents/post_covid-19_fatigue.pdf

Remember that applying pacing strategies on a regular basis is an effective way of managing fatigue.

If you have questions about long COVID, please email us at: readaptation.covid.cisssmo16@ssss.gouv.qc.ca.

Our mission

To maintain, improve, and restore the health and well-being of the Québec population by making accessible an array of integrated and quality health and social services, while contributing to the social and economic development of Québec.

Our vision

Accessible and efficient health care and services that adapt to the needs of Québécois.

Our goals

The CISSS de la Montérégie-Ouest achieves its goals through its innovative approaches and stands apart through:

- its exemplary offer of care and integrated services based on interdisciplinarity, accessibility, and adaptability to the needs of its population;
- its willingness to question and improve its professional, clinical, and administrative practices;
- its appreciation of its personnel and the implementation of human resource management practices;
- its strong relationships with its partners.

Our values

Our actions are guided by five equal and interconnected values: compassion, collaboration, commitment, confidence and consistency.