

## Plan: Measure physical activity

### Why measure physical activity intensity

Common symptoms of post-viral fatigue can include weakness, fatigue, shortness of breath, and difficulty with walking and performing daily tasks. Post-viral fatigue can make it difficult to do mild activity without feeling fatigued. This is known as post-exertional malaise (PEM). Heart rate monitoring and activity management can help to manage fatigue and avoid post-exertional malaise.

PEM is a group of symptoms that can happen when you use too much physical, mental, and emotional energy. For example minimal exertion such as walking to the bathroom can lead to an experience of worsening of symptoms.



### Strategies for measuring activity intensity

Measuring the intensity of your physical activity can help you to pace your activity in a way that is safe and manageable for your current energy levels and symptoms. You should not push yourself through fatigue or worsening of symptoms.

The following tools can help you measure the intensity of your physical activity:

- Self-monitoring
- Talk test
- Heart rate monitoring

### SELF-MONITORING

Self-monitoring is when you pay attention to symptoms, and then adjust activity based on feedback from your body.

If you experience an increase in heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating and increased fatigue you slow down your movements to achieve a more moderate and sustainable pace of activity.

Self-monitoring symptoms can assist in determining how hard your body is working. This can help you adjust the intensity of the activity by speeding up or slowing down your movements.



## Strategies for measuring activity intensity

### TALK TEST

The talk test is a simple way to make sure that you're not pushing yourself too hard.

While doing an activity: talk out loud, sing or talk to a friend. If you start to feel out of breath, or have trouble speaking in full sentences, then the activity is too intense. Slow down, and give yourself a minute to catch your breath. When you are able to comfortably carry on a conversation, then you have found the right intensity for your activity.

The activities below are mild to moderate in intensity and could be used for the talk test:

- Walking (inside the home or outside)
- Tai Chi
- Qi Gong
- Yoga
- Gardening



### HEART RATE MONITORING

Another strategy for monitoring physical activity intensity is heart rate monitoring. Calculating your anaerobic threshold heart rate allows you to maintain your pace within the aerobic/target zone of activity. When you reach your anaerobic threshold heart rate, your body starts using energy less efficiently. Symptoms could look like increased heart rate, shallow breath, increased pain and/or fatigue in the muscles.

The goal is to spend less time in your anaerobic heart rate threshold to conserve energy. Monitoring your heart rate provides an “alert system” informing you that your current activity level is too intense.

**Anaerobic threshold heart rate calculation** =  $(220 - \text{age}) \times 0.6$

Example:

Jane is 39 years old and wants to go for a walk.

$$(220 - 39) \times 0.6 = 108.6 \text{ beats per minute}$$

Jane will try to stay below her anaerobic threshold of 109 beats per minute when walking.

The goal is to keep your heart rate below this target while active.

## Benefits of measuring activity intensity

- **Monitor:** Monitoring your body's response to activity helps to more accurately pace your activities, while staying below the anaerobic threshold.
- **Adapt:** Learn to make adjustments to your daily activities. For example, if stair climbing sends your heart rate over your anaerobic threshold, minimize or avoid that activity. Monitoring your heart rate or your increase in symptoms allows you to adjust your physical exertion in that moment. This may include stopping or slowing down your activity to allow your heart rate to drop below your anaerobic threshold. For example while climbing the stairs you may stop half way and take a short rest.
- **Reduce fatigue:** Determine if you are going into PEM and avoid triggering a symptom response with exertion.
- **Rest:** You can use the increased heart rate, sweating, breathing rate or fatigue as signals to help you recognize when you need rest.



## Learn what lowers your heart rate

- Sitting or lying down
- Taking slow deep breaths or using other relaxation techniques
- Changing postures while performing an activity, e.g. sit instead of standing
- Taking breaks during activity, e.g. when climbing stairs