



Physical Activity

We know that there are many benefits of movement but understand that this is difficult when you have pain. Often people worry that movement will make the pain or condition worse. We will support you to feel safe in making small steps in your activity levels based on your needs.

What is exercise and why is it helpful?

Exercise is any physical activity that maintains or improves fitness, health and well-being. It does not have to be a vigorous workout in a gym, but can be very gentle movements, stretches or walking.

Exercise helps regulate the body's protective systems. This can lead to improvements in mood and self-esteem, cardio-vascular fitness, muscle strength and tone, flexibility, bone density, balance, co-ordination, immune system function, sleep and energy levels.

Which exercise is best?

There may be current trends or news reports but in fact there is no evidence that one particular type of exercise is better than any other for patients with persistent pain. The most important thing is that you choose a type of exercise you can manage and enjoy.

You may have to start at a lower level than others, but it is normal for all of us to have very different levels of flexibility and fitness.

Expectations from exercise.

Exercise cannot provide a cure or fix for persistent pain but can help prevent pain from causing disability.

Exercise can help keep your body strong and as healthy as possible even though pain is present.

How can I start exercising?

- Choose what you think you will enjoy most and if you don't like groups, try at home or in the park.
- Add exercise to your everyday life, for example you can try a few stretches when watching TV or as a break from work.
- Start at a level you know you can achieve and build up slowly.
- The urge not to exercise is normal and it is helpful to think about different ways you could encourage yourself to exercise.

Take Home Message.

Exercise does not have to be a strenuous workout, it can be small, gentle stretches or going for a walk.



All levels of exercise have health benefits and can improve our overall well-being, but it is important to start small and build up gradually.

Ask yourself: What small action can I take this week to start some exercise?

Activity planning

Common activity habits include:

1. Pushing through – might lead to flare-ups.
2. Avoiding – stops us doing important things.

Both these normal activity habits keep the pain system sensitive through learning.

STRATEGY: PACING and SMALL STEPS

Plan activity levels rather than let symptoms decide for you.

Experiment with doing an activity to a planned level.

- on a good pain day this could mean doing less,
- on a bad pain day it might mean doing a little more.

Think of how much of a particular activity you might do on a good day and on a bad day then find a goal in between.

The idea is to start with an amount of the activity that is achievable, *even on most 'bad' days*.

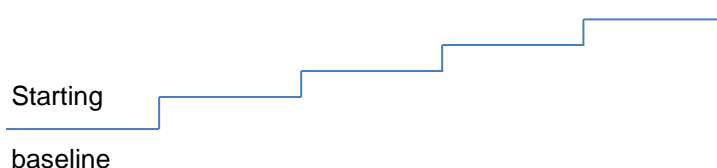
If the pain system becomes a little 'noisy' with the activity, it is saying 'be careful'; it is doing its job. Work with it a little and avoid the temptation to push through.

Activating the pain system a little, without pushing through it, can help it to learn that an *activity is safe* and might help it to desensitise in the long-term.

Focus on activities that are meaningful to you but currently difficult. This relates to your goals.

Progressing with small steps.

When you are able to consistently achieve your goal, you can consider increasing it a little, small step by small step.





Organise activity where possible throughout the day to include some rest or less aggravating activities. This might mean planning your day a little differently and changing how you do things.

The key message is:

That doing things differently may be more workable to help you achieve your goals and manage your pain.



Resources:

Better Gyms

Information can be found on the Better Website:

<https://www.better.org.uk/leisure-centre/london/camden>

You are eligible for a concession to the Better Gym if you are:

- a Camden resident
- a student
- over 55
- in receipt of benefit payments or have a disability

You can also use Better leisure centres without being a member at all.

Better Camden Leisure Centres

- Pancras Square Leisure - 5 Pancras Square, N1C 4AG
- Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre - 4A Adelaide Rd, Camden NW3 3NF
- Talacre Community Sports Centre - Dalby St, Kentish Town, NW5 3AF
- Kentish Town Sports Centre - Grafton Road, NW5 3DU
- Oasis Sports Centre - 32 Endell Street, Covent Garden, WC2H 9AG

Swimming

FREE swimming is available for over 55s at all the above centres apart from Talacre Community Sports Centre, on weekdays between 6:30am-12noon. To access this offer, all you need is to be a **Camden resident** and have a **Pay and Play card** which costs **£5.70 per year**.

If you are interested in swimming but have limited mobility so you aren't able to access the pool easily, there is a PoolPod at Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre and Kentish Town Sports Centre. This is the latest innovation to access the pool in a safe, secure, and friendly manner. Please speak to a member of staff, email camdenpartnership@gll.org or visit www.better.org.uk/lp/pool-pod for more information.

Camden Active

Register online before attending a class <https://camdenactive.camden.gov.uk/register/>

Later life community exercise

- Community exercise vouchers cost **£3 each**.
- **Classes** cost **one voucher** for Camden residents and two vouchers for non-Camden residents (unless otherwise stated)
- Vouchers can be purchased from all Camden libraries, e.g. Camden Town library. You can try your first later life community exercise class for **FREE**.

There's lots of different classes on offer like: Badminton, Healthy Hearts, Seated Exercise, Yoga, Tai Chi and Healthy Bones.



Camden Active Health Team Clinical Referral for Physical Activity (Camden Council)

[Sport and physical activity - Camden Council](#)

Available for patients with conditions such as obesity, diabetes, poor mental health, falls, heart disease, stroke and osteoporosis

Patients are given eight weeks of free physical activity sessions, followed by subsidised sessions if appropriate.

[Keep active and healthy - Camden Council](#)

Outdoor Gyms in Camden

- Open to everyone and **FREE** to use.
- Range of equipment for strength, cardio and toning workouts, and are easy to use.

Located in these parks and open spaces:

- [Alf Barrett Playground \(Holborn\)](#) - Old Gloucester Street Gardens, WC1
- [Bramber Green \(Kings Cross\)](#) - Bramber Green, WC1
- [Cantelows Gardens](#) - Park on Camden Road, NW5
- [Cumberland Market Open Space](#) - Gardens in Cumberland Market, Regents Park Estate, NW1
- [Kilburn Grange Park](#) - Park on Kilburn High Road near Messina Avenue, NW6
- [Lismore Circus](#) - Lismore Community Wood, off Lambie Street, NW5
- [Maygrove Peace Park](#) - Open space in Maygrove Road, NW6
- [Polygon Open Space](#) - Chalton Street Gardens, NW1, next to Plot 10 Centre
- [Swiss Cottage \(outside of the Sports Centre\)](#) - Swiss Cottage Park, Behind 88 Avenue Road, Swiss Cottage, NW3

Camden Health Walks

Call the Active Health Team: 020 7974 4444 or email: walking@camden.gov.uk or visit the walking for Health Website: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk/walkfinder/camden-walks

- Organised by Camden Council
- Led by qualified Walk Leaders
- **FREE** for all to join, including those new to exercise (under 16s please come with an adult)
- No need to book in advance (apart from the Bangladeshi Older Women's Walk and Camden Carers Walk)
- Just wear clothes and shoes comfortable for walking
- **Weekly** walks lasting between 30 and 120 minutes (turn up 10 minutes before the start time)
- Benches and toilets along each route. Several of the routes include a stop for refreshments
- Great opportunity to make new friends and meet new people in a relaxed environment.