



Polyclinics
SingHealth

Musculoskeletal Pain: Should I Exercise?



Disclaimer: Please note that the instructions shown are strictly for general information only. If you have any queries, kindly check with your healthcare provider.



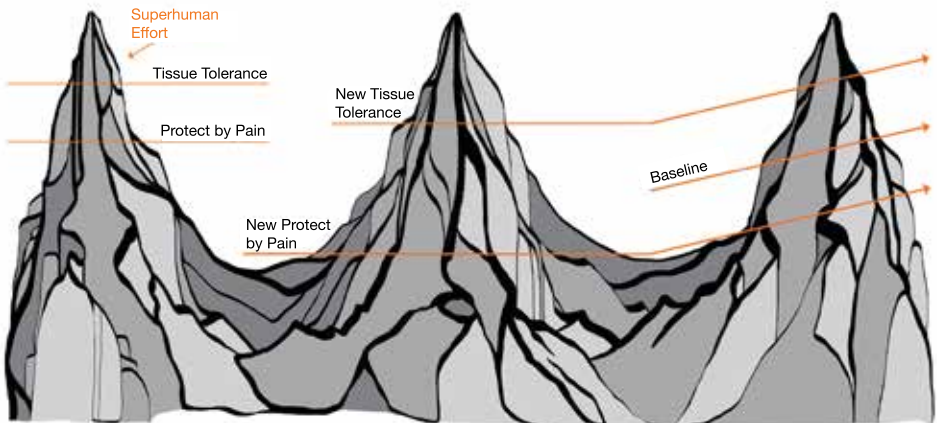
SCAN ME

A

What will happen if I exercise after an injury?

The left mountain peak, shown in the figure below, represents your body tissue in healthy condition – strong and has high Tolerance to injury. The “**Protect by Pain**” line, which is below the “Tissue Tolerance” line, can trigger pain sensation if you push too hard in your activity towards the Tissue Tolerance limit. This pain triggering mechanism is important in preventing us from getting injured.

The middle mountain peak depicts what happens after an injury. Your body tissue may be a little unfit – there is a drop in the “New Tissue Tolerance” line. But your “New Protect by Pain” line has dropped even lower! This means that pain sensation can be triggered much earlier, and before your activity could cause further damage to the body tissue. This protective mechanism has caused the injured body part to be very sensitive!



To exercise after an injury, you should establish your initial “**Baseline**” – the amount of activity or exercise you could do before triggering a flare-up.

Sometimes, a pain flare-up happens but it does not mean you have done more damage. The “Baseline” is still way below the “New Tissue Tolerance” line, so you did not cause any damage.

The ideal exercise is to train within the safe buffer zone between “Baseline” and “New Protect by Pain” line. You would feel sore but it is safe.

As you exercise, your “Tissue Tolerance”, “Baseline” and “New Protect by Pain” will progressively improve as you recover.

B Will exercise cause more wear-and-tear or pain?

Wear-and-tear or degenerations are common features found in scans as you get older.

Many people with abnormal scans are actually pain free.

Exercise and usual daily activity do not wear your body out. You are able to avoid further injury if you start activity gradually, and practise regularly.

In fact, progressive exercise makes you stronger and reduces pain.

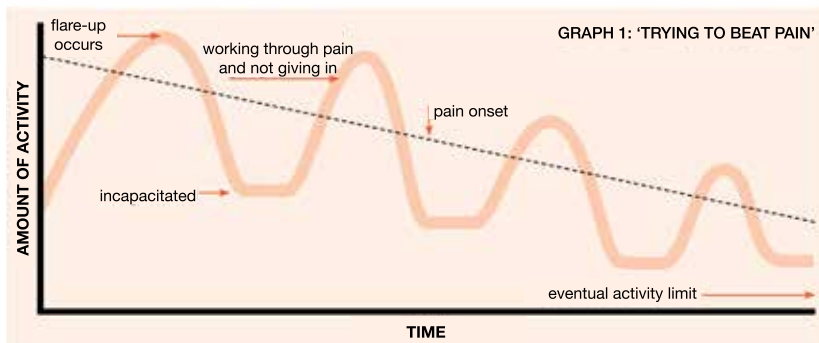
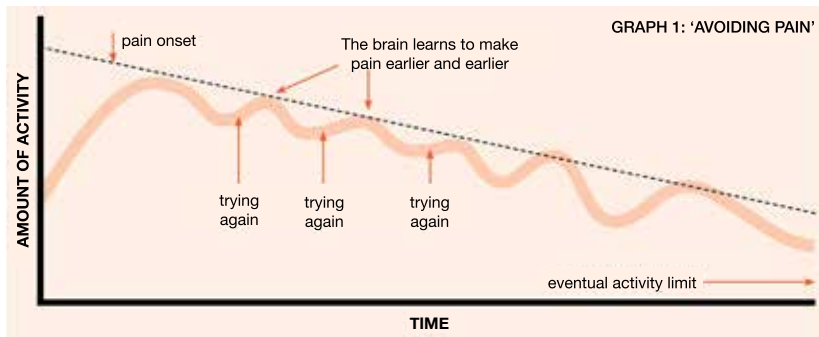




Why my pain did not improve after I exercise?

There could be 2 possible reasons:

- Avoiding pain out of fear can contribute to pain chronicity
- Overcome pain with sudden increase of workout, which can overstrain yourself and cause frequent flare-ups



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Explain Pain Second Edition (2013) Butler & Moseley, Noigroup Publications



“Start by doing what’s necessary, then do what’s possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

- Saint Francis of Assisi

