

Moving More Every Day

Setting Your Activity Goals

Structured exercise sessions are important — but what you do in the rest of your day matters just as much. Long periods of sitting, low daily step counts, and inactivity between sessions slow your recovery and reduce the benefit of your exercises. This resource shows you how to set realistic daily movement goals and make small, sustainable changes that compound into meaningful recovery gains.

1 Why Daily Movement Matters

Research consistently shows that sedentary behaviour independently predicts slower recovery, even in people who do their prescribed exercises. The body responds to the total load it receives across the day — not just the load during formal sessions. Prolonged sitting reduces blood flow to healing tissues, increases local inflammation, and allows muscles to decondition between sessions.

Effect of Inactivity	What It Means for Your Rehab
Reduced blood flow to healing tissues	Nutrients and oxygen needed for tissue repair are delivered via blood. Prolonged sitting restricts this, slowing the repair process.
Increased pain sensitivity	Sedentary periods are associated with central sensitisation — your nervous system becomes more reactive, amplifying pain signals even from minor stimuli.
Muscle deconditioning	Muscles lose strength and endurance rapidly with inactivity. This undermines the gains made in exercise sessions and increases injury risk.
Reduced overall activity tolerance	A sedentary day lowers your capacity for the next day's session, creating a cycle of reduced activity and slower recovery.

2 Setting a Step Goal

Daily step count is a simple, measurable proxy for overall movement. Current evidence supports 7,000–10,000 steps per day for general health benefits, but during rehabilitation the key principle is to start from your current baseline and increase gradually — rather than jumping straight to a target that may be unachievable or cause a flare-up.

Starting Point	Suggested Weekly Target	How to Build
Under 3,000 steps/day (Very low activity)	Increase by 10–15% per week (e.g. 3,000 → 3,300–3,450)	Add one short walk per day. Focus on consistency before distance.

3,000–6,000 steps/day (Moderate activity)	Increase by 10–15% per week (e.g. 4,500 → 4,950–5,175)	Extend existing walks by 5 minutes or add a second short walk.
Over 6,000 steps/day (Active)	Aim for 7,000–10,000 steps/day based on your condition	Maintain current level; increase pace or terrain challenge under clinician guidance.

Your step goal should feel manageable — not exhausting. Consistency beats intensity. A modest daily step count maintained every day is more beneficial than occasional high-step days followed by rest.

3 Breaking Up Sitting Time

Evidence shows that breaking sedentary time every 30–60 minutes reduces pain, stiffness, and metabolic risk — even without increasing your total step count for the day. The benefit comes from interrupting the prolonged static posture, not from the intensity of movement during the break.

Simple Strategies to Break Up Sitting

- Stand and move for 2–3 minutes every 30–60 minutes — even pacing around the room is enough.
- Set a phone timer or reminder to alert you every 30–45 minutes.
- Walk to make a drink, collect post, or make a phone call standing up.
- Try sit-to-stand transitions at your desk — simply standing and sitting several times counts as movement.

4 Tracking Your Activity

Tracking your daily movement increases accountability and provides your clinician with useful information about your progress and activity patterns between sessions. You do not need expensive equipment — several free options are available.

Tool	Pros	Cons
Phone step counter (built-in, free)	Always with you; free; easy to check; no setup required on most smartphones.	Must carry phone; accuracy varies if phone is in a bag rather than pocket.
Fitness tracker / smartwatch	Worn continuously; tracks heart rate, sleep, and stairs in addition to steps.	Upfront cost (£30–£300+); requires charging; may feel intrusive.
Simple pedometer or paper log	Very low cost; no battery or phone needed; paper log allows notes on symptoms.	No automatic sync; requires manual recording; easy to forget.

5 Key Takeaways

KEY TAKEAWAY 1

Your structured exercises matter — and so does everything in between. Moving consistently throughout the day amplifies the effect of your exercise sessions. Sedentary gaps between sessions slow tissue recovery and reduce overall gains. Think of daily movement as an extension of your rehabilitation, not a separate concern.

KEY TAKEAWAY 2

Start from your baseline and build gradually. A 10–15% weekly increase in daily steps is safe, sustainable, and evidence-backed. Jumping straight to a high step target risks a flare-up and sets back your progress. Small, consistent increases compound into significant long-term improvement.

KEY TAKEAWAY 3

Breaking up sitting is one of the most cost-effective things you can do. Getting up for 2–3 minutes every 30–60 minutes is among the easiest, most evidence-backed strategies for reducing pain and supporting recovery. It costs nothing, takes minimal effort, and requires no equipment — just a reminder and the habit of acting on it.