

# Pacing

Last Updated - May 23, 2024 - 08:52 AM

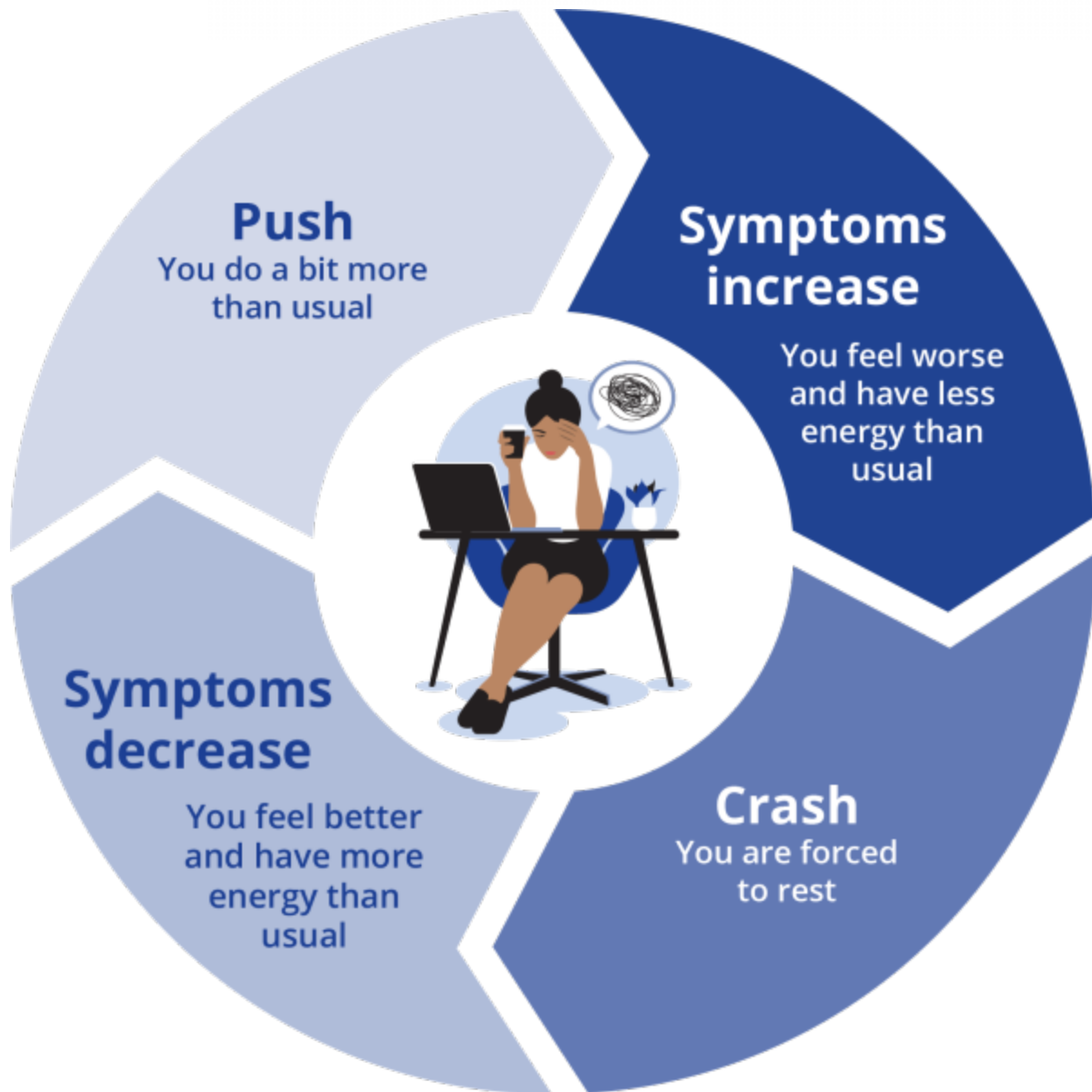
## Fatigue and pacing

Fatigue is a prevalent symptom of long COVID.

Fatigue is the result of changes in the way your body produces and uses energy on a cellular level.

Most people with long COVID will find their fatigue follows a **push/crash pattern**, which is a key sign of post-exertional malaise (PEM). Read more about PEM [here](#).





## A Stop-Rest-Pace approach





**STOP** trying to push your limits. Overexertion may be detrimental to your recovery.



**REST** is your most important management strategy. Do not wait until you feel symptoms to rest.



**PACE** your daily physical and cognitive activities. This is a safe approach to navigate triggers of symptoms.

A **Stop-Rest-Pace approach** will allow you to break the push/crash cycle and experience some relief from disabling symptoms. When you do regain the energy to return to your usual activities, a paced approach will help you avoid another crash.

Pacing is the most effective approach to managing the push/crash cycle.



When you use more energy than you have on a given day, this can result in a flare-up of your symptoms. This might not happen right away, but it can happen some time after the day you pushed yourself.

At the same time, if you stop doing anything for weeks or months, this can also be harmful to your mental and physical health.

It's a careful balance.

Using only what energy is available to you, and not “over-doing it”, is called staying within your **energy envelope** (this is a term you will see a lot in *MyGuide*).

Understanding your own energy envelope (or finding your energy envelope) is part of pacing.

## What is pacing?



Pacing is about spreading out your energy across activities that you both need to do and want to do. Often, the activities or situations that are the most intense will burn energy much quicker than slow and steady activities.

Maintaining a steady pace and taking on tasks one at a time with rest breaks in between activities is the core idea behind pacing. You may need

to get creative with how you use your energy.

Here is a helpful analogy to think about your energy.

### **Your Energy Bank Account**

Think of pacing like how you manage money in a bank account. You might think about “budgeting” your energy so that it does not run out. You can spread your energy out over days, weeks, and months instead of “spending it” all at once in one place.

If you can avoid racking up an “energy debt” and work within your limited energy budget, you may be able to do some or all of your daily activities with no long COVID symptoms, or only mild symptoms that are manageable.

Most people find they need to continue to budget to avoid their symptoms flaring up, but they are able to gradually increase the amount of energy they spend each day, without experiencing significant crashes.

## **Tools and strategies**

Pacing can be very individual – it does not look the same for any two people and one approach that works for one person might not work for another.

However, there are some tools that are helpful for most people when starting to use pacing to manage fatigue. These are also covered in other

parts of this *MyGuide*.

- Switching from one activity to another frequently to give your body a break, even when you don't have time to rest. For example, break up the time you spend doing mental tasks like paperwork with routine physical tasks like tidying or cleaning.
- “Micro breaks” of 1 to 5 minutes during your day to check-in on how you are feeling, catch your breath, and calm your mind before continuing with what you were doing.
- Taking true rest breaks of 10 to 30 minutes or more to give your mind and body a chance to slow your oxygen consumption, relax tense muscles, lower your heart rate, and take account of how you are coping. Many people benefit from guided meditations, spending time sitting in nature, or following breathing exercises aimed at calming the nervous system. If you consistently fall asleep when you try to take “true rest” breaks, you might want to add in time specifically for napping.
- If you are unsure which physical activities might be too intense for your body, use a heart rate monitor to identify more strenuous activities and slow them down or take frequent rest breaks. [Heart Rate Monitoring](#) can also be helpful for finding your energy envelope.
- If you are struggling to understand what kinds of activities or events are causing your symptoms to flare up, try tracking your symptoms and activities using the [Symptoms and Activity Tracker Booklet](#) in *MyGuide*.
- If you are looking to adapt your activities to save energy and minimize the impact of a symptom flare, try [Energy Conservation](#).

- If you are looking for how to safely increase your activity once your symptoms are more stable, try the techniques covered in [Returning to Activity](#).

## Where to next?

- Click [Post-Exertional Malaise \(PEM\)](#) to learn more about the push/crash pattern,
- Click [Heart Rate Monitoring](#) for more information on how to find your energy envelope.
- Try tracking your symptoms and activities using the [Symptoms and Activity Tracker Booklet](#) in *MyGuide*.
- Try [Energy Conservation](#).
- Try the techniques covered in the [Returning to Activity](#) section.

