

10. Is it safe to keep moving when you are in pain?

Thomas, 61, had been a postman for most of his life. He was used to walking long distances every day, but lately his lower back and hips had started aching after long routes. At first, he thought it was just fatigue. Then the pain began showing up even on weekends, when he was resting.

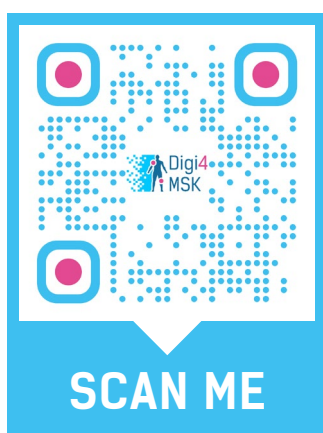
He grew worried and cut down his walks, spending more time on the sofa. Strangely, the more he rested, the stiffer he felt. His legs felt heavy in the morning, and he needed extra time to get going. *"Maybe I'm doing more harm by moving"* he told his wife, *"better to let things settle"*.

One day, while chatting with his neighbour, a retired nurse, he mentioned that even light gardening now made him sore. She listened and asked, *"Does it hurt more after you move, or mostly while you're doing it?"* Thomas thought about it. The discomfort usually faded once he got going, and the next day was not any worse.

The nurse smiled. *"That's a good sign"* she said. *"If the pain doesn't flare up afterwards, your body's likely coping fine. Some mild pain during activity isn't dangerous—it just means the tissues are working. But if the pain stays stronger for a day or two after, then maybe the load was too much, and you can adjust next time."*

Her words stayed with him. Maybe pain was not always a warning to stop, but a signal to pace himself. That evening, Thomas looked out at his garden and thought about giving it another gentle try.

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Skills you can build by watching the video:

- Understanding that mild pain during activity can be safe and part of recovery.
- Recognizing that a strong or lasting increase in pain after 24–48 hours may indicate the activity was too intense.
- Learning how to monitor pain behaviour and adjust exercise levels to stay active safely.

YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/fpuX54YQen4>

10.1. Why does moving help (even when you have pain)?

You might believe that if something hurts, you should stop doing it completely, especially with pain. But for long-lasting (chronic) pain, this normally is not true.

1. **Pain does not always mean damage:** Imagine your body's pain system like a sensitive car alarm. Sometimes, after an injury, this alarm stays extra sensitive, even after the injury is healed. So you might feel pain, but it does not mean you are causing more harm or damage to your body by moving.
2. **Moving is healthy:** Even though exercise might make your pain or discomfort feel a bit worse at first, over time this will get better and is key to getting back to living your life.
3. **Avoiding movement can make pain worse:** If you avoid moving because of fear, your muscles can get weaker, and your body can actually become *more* sensitive to pain over time. Starting to move gradually helps breaking this cycle.



10.2. How to start and keep moving safely?

1. **Start small and increase gradually:** Begin with an amount of activity that feels comfortable, even if it seems too easy. For example, just walk for 5 minutes, or lift a very light object a few times. The key is to start easy, and gradually increase the amount over time.
2. **Pace yourself:** Do not try to do too much on your good days, only to crash and do nothing on bad days. Try to keep your activity levels manageable every day.
3. **Understand “sore but safe”:** It is important to know the difference between pain that indicates harm and pain that is just your body getting used to movement. When you start a new exercise routine or do physical tasks you have not done in a while, it is completely normal to feel some muscle soreness and stiffness in the days that follow. This is known as delayed onset muscle soreness, or DOMS. It is a natural response as your muscles adapt to new demands. The good news? Your body is amazing at adjusting. As you continue to stay active, this soreness will lessen, and you will likely feel much less discomfort the next time—unless you take a long break again.
4. **Stop if you** feel sharp, new, or rapidly increasing pain. Think of it like a traffic light:
 - **Green** means go, no pain.
 - **Yellow** means mild, familiar discomfort, proceed with some caution.
 - **Red** means stop if you feel sharp or increasing pain.

Takeaway messages:

You are key to your recovery; every small step you take towards moving more is a powerful effort. Moving with pain is not about pushing through agony, but about taking **smart, gentle steps forward.** Do not hesitate to share any concerns or difficulties with your healthcare professional; they are there to support you in regaining confidence and improving your quality of life, guiding you towards a more active and comfortable life.