

Exercise Recovery Companion

Our bodies are designed to withstand and adapt to the physical stresses we place on them. This adaptation is how we get stronger and are able to do more activity over time. Think about the first time you tried a new exercise or started a new activity. It probably wasn't easy! But if you stuck with it, I bet it got easier over time, right? That is because your body adapted to the loads that you repeatedly placed on it.

But when there is too much load and not enough time to rest and recover, we can sometimes experience pain or injury. However, knowing when you're doing too much is not always easy. That's why we made this guide! This guide will help you recognize warning signs of pain and determine if the loads being placed on your body are greater than what you are able to handle.



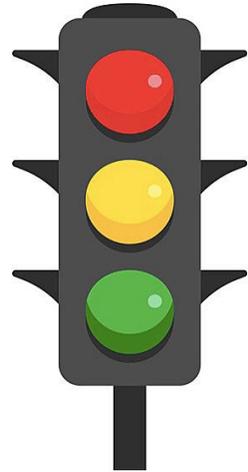
Use this guide to help you:

- ➔ **STAY ON TRACK.** Whether you are exercising on your own or recovering from an injury, the information in this guide will help you minimize setbacks and continue making gains.
- ➔ **BUILD TISSUE TOLERANCE.** The best way to avoid pain/injury is to make your body stronger so it can withstand more stress and activity.
- ➔ **UNDERSTAND GRADED EXPOSURE.** Too much too soon can be a bad thing. Understanding graded exposure will help keep you from overdoing it and continue to work towards your goals.

Traffic Light System

Feeling some discomfort when starting a new activity or while recovering from an injury is normal. That discomfort will improve and the activity will get easier as you build tissue tolerance and get stronger. But knowing the difference between hurt vs harm during activity can be challenging. This challenge is why some of our patients stop activities too soon at the first sign of pain or decide to push through pain when they shouldn't.

That's where the "Traffic Light System" comes in. Use this system to monitor your progress as you work through new activities and exercise.



GREEN LIGHT = SAFE

- Zero pain or some discomfort during activity (<4/10 pain) BUT pain is no worse after activity OR back to baseline within 1 hour.
- NO loss of range of motion, strength, or function.
- What this means: Be confident in adding more activity! Add 1-5% more activity per day/session to continue progress.

YELLOW LIGHT = STILL SAFE BUT PROCEED WITH CAUTION

- Some increase in pain during activity (4-7/10 pain) AND symptoms persist after activity (2-24hrs)
- NO loss of range of motion, strength, or function.
- What this means: Maybe a little too much too soon. Give your body a chance to rest 1-2 days before retrying activity. Modify exercise intensity and/or duration until you get back to a green light.

RED LIGHT = TOO MUCH

- Pain worsens during activity (>7/10 pain) AND stops you from performing the activity any longer AND pain lasts longer than 24hrs.
- SIGNIFICANT decrease in range of motion, strength, and/or function .
- What this means: Definitely too much too soon. Rest for at least 48hrs before returning to green light activities. If pain persists, get advice from your chiropractor or physiotherapist.

Helpful Tips:



Monitor your symptoms – pain, swelling, and movement – these should be noted DURING exercise, LATER that day, and the next MORNING.



It can be helpful to keep a written training diary to help you follow your progress and notice any reoccurring patterns in your symptoms.



Don't think that you always have to be in the "green light" zone. It's okay to push yourself every now and again, that's how we get stronger! We usually recommend 1-2 days of lower load following a day of higher load.



If you are still having trouble achieving "green lights" with new activities, ask your health care provider for help!

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How many reps and sets should I be doing?

A: Unless specified by your practitioner, we usually recommend doing 2-3 sets of as many reps as you can until you feel like you need a break. This does not mean going until failure or pushing through pain. Rather, we want you to perform as many reps as you can with good form and pain-free. Stop when you feel like your form is starting to deteriorate or you feel like you only have 2-3 more reps left in the tank. Follow the "Traffic Light System" if you're unsure.



Q: How hard should I be working?

A: It depends. Generally speaking, your activities should be challenging enough to stimulate tissue adaptation so you get stronger or gain more muscular endurance over time. If you are exercising on a regular basis, exercising somewhere between 70-80% of your capacity is a good place to be. We find this to be the sweet spot where you are making gains while still having gas left in the tank for the next day. Of course, it's okay to push yourself some days or take some days off if you need rest. Just listen to your body.

Q: How often should I be doing these exercises?

A: It depends on what your goals are and what your current fitness level is. We just want you to be consistent with your exercises because consistency over time is how you're going to reach your goals and get stronger. But it's okay to skip a day sometimes if you need a break or life gets in the way. Aim for doing your exercises at least 4 times per week without going more than 2 days in a row without doing them. When in doubt, refer to the "Traffic Light System" or ask your practitioner for help.

Q: I'm sore after my exercises. Is that bad?

A: Some discomfort or soreness is perfectly normal when you are strengthening new muscle groups. Sore is safe in our book. Use the "Traffic Light System" as your guide for how much is too much.

Q: The exercises I'm doing seem too hard. What should I do?

A: The easy answer is, make them simpler! You can do this by decreasing the weight, speed, duration, or reps of most exercises. If you are still having difficulties, ask your health care provider for advice on some modifications.