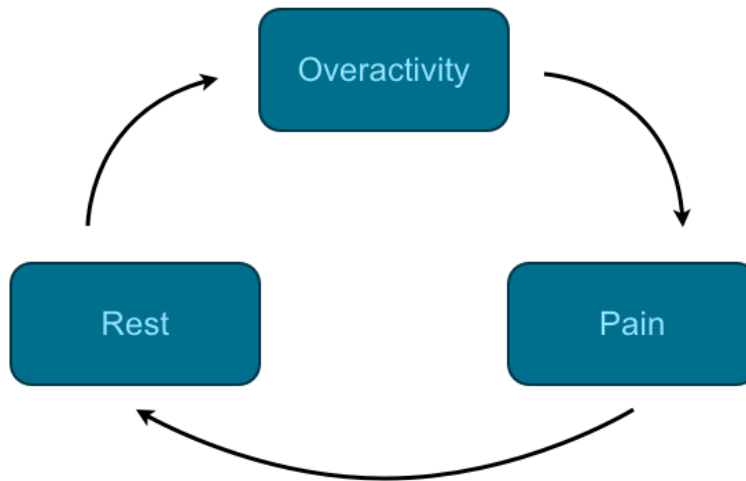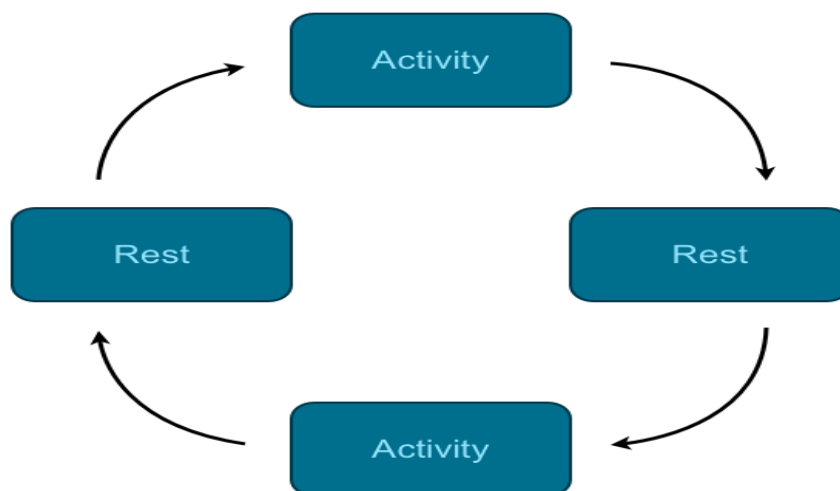# Activity Pacing

If you have chronic pain you may push yourself to do lots of physical activity when you are having a "good" day. Unfortunately, later your pain is usually so severe that you have to rest for a long time to recover. This is called the **Pain Cycle**. It looks like this:

```
        Overactivity

  Rest              Pain
```

People usually find themselves repeating the pain cycle over and over. Unfortunately, doing this can make your pain worse, and can make you more tired, tense, and worried. In the long term you may find that you end up avoiding things that are fun and make you feel good to keep from having severe pain. The best way to avoid the pain cycle is to develop an **activity-rest cycle**. You can do this by pacing yourself. That means you alternate planned periods of activity with regular rest periods. It looks like this:

```
          Activity

   Rest              Rest

          Activity
```

There are three steps to pacing yourself:

1. Make a list of some of the things that you tend to overdo.

2. Make a time limit for the activity and then STOP and REST.

3. Keep track of how you are doing (how many times did you stop yourself from overdoing it?).

Activity Pacing Form

1. Choose activities that tend to increase your pain or fatigue.

   Activity 1: _____
   Activity 2: _____
   Activity 3: _____

2. Decide how many minutes of activity and how many minutes of rest you will do for each activity.

3. Record the week's <u>starting</u> goal for being active and resting for each activity.

4. Then record the activity-rest schedule you actually used that day for each activity
   a. Record ratio of minutes active: minutes rested.
   b. Write the number of cycles of activity-rest you did in parentheses. If you completed Activity-Rest-Activity-Rest, you would write (2).
   c. Write a one- or two-word description of how you felt after the activity (e.g., rested, okay, hurt, tired, satisfied, proud).

5. In the row marked "Overall," write whether your activity level increased, decreased, or stayed the same for that activity over the week. Also, add up the number of pacing cycles you completed for the week and write that in parentheses. A good goal to shoot for is 3 cycles per day or 21 per week.

Activity Pacing Form

	Sample	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Task	Rake Leaves			
Active Goal:	10 min			
Rest Goal:	15 min			
Day 1	**10:15 (1) okay**			
Day 2	**10:15 (2) rested**			
Day 3	**10:15 (3) good job!**			
Day 4	**15:15 (1) tired**			
Day 5	**15:15 (2) better**			
Day 6	**15:15 (3) okay**			
Day 7	**20:15 (2) finished yard!**			
Overall	**Increasing (14)**			