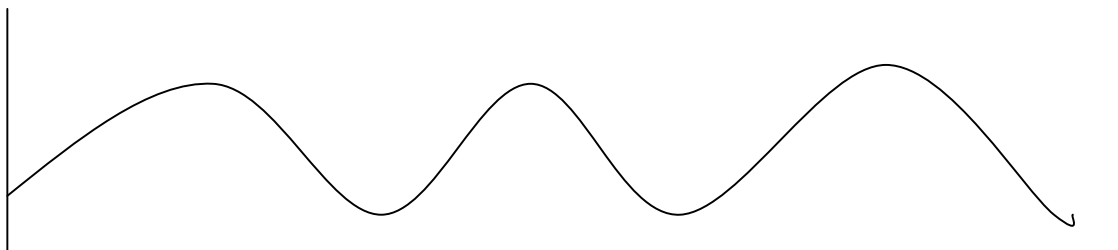


## OVER ACTIVITY AND UNDER ACTIVITY CYCLE

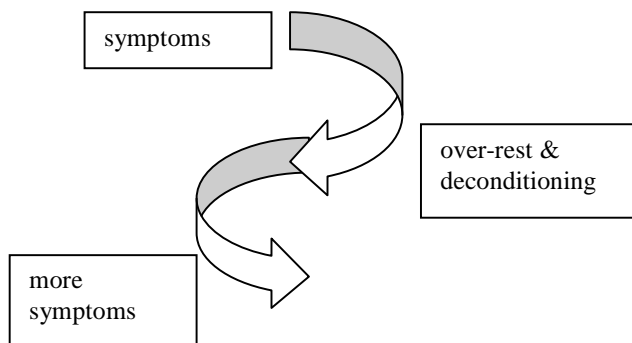
Many people with CFS/ME change the way they do things. Some may reduce the hours they work, others may do fewer enjoyable activities (especially socialising and sports) and others avoid trying new activities and rest more during the day.

On days when you have fewer symptoms, it is tempting to do the jobs or activities that you were unable to do on days when you were too tired. It is easy to overdo it on these 'good' days which results in you feeling more tired on subsequent days and unable to do as much. This can become a 'boom or bust' pattern of activity and may cause an increase in your symptoms.



This "overactivity and underactivity cycle" is a common pattern to many people with CFS/ME.

Prolonged rest can result in weaker muscles and a drop in fitness. Although the symptoms from over-activity subside, rest makes the body stiffer, painful and more tired. The associated feelings of frustration cause despair and can leave you feel as though you have no control over your condition.



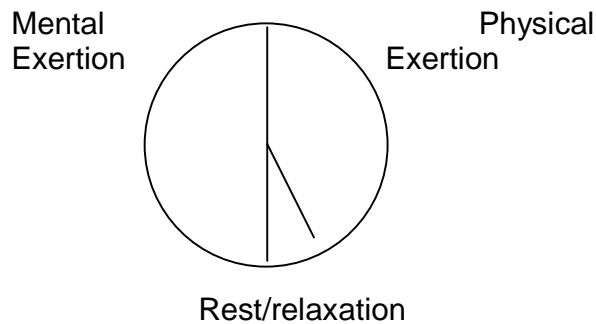
A downward spiral that results in a deconditioned body

### **Common problems associated with this cycle**

1. Increased symptoms including body aches and pains and fatigue.
2. Symptoms feel out of control.
3. It feels impossible to plan ahead because of a possible 'flare up'.
4. Work/activity becomes steadily harder as fitness decreases.
5. You feel as if you are not getting anywhere, causing frustration and hopelessness.
6. Difficulty relaxing due to anxiety over lack of control.

## How to change

First of all you need to be able to acknowledge that there may be a lack of balance between physical and mental activity and relaxation activities. The components of this imbalance vary according to the individual and will also change with time.



### Each day

Try and aim to keep a balance of different activities in your day. These activities should be broken up with sufficient rest breaks. Resting and relaxing should be something you choose to do **before** you have exceeded your limit. These relaxation sessions and breaks can be planned into your daily activities. An activity diary can help you monitor this and plan activity.

The amount of rest you have may vary depending on whether you are having a day with more symptoms or a day with fewer symptoms but try to find a general baseline of activity that you feel you can manage *even on a bad day*.

### Over the week

Look at your pattern of activity and try and distribute the days when you are doing more throughout the week. For example, if you are working 2 days a week, try and space these out.

### During an activity

Be aware of varying your posture, taking short breaks and doing gentle stretches while you are engaged in a task. This may feel difficult to do, particularly if you are not in the habit of taking breaks or feel pressured to get things done quickly.

It is important to remember that relaxation is just as important an activity as work, housework, cooking dinner or phoning a friend. It is about you actively planning things that are helpful for your recovery. You may find it hard to take breaks and manage your activity levels in this way, particularly if you are used to being constantly on the go, but like any new skill or activity, you will get better with practice.