

PAIN $\neq$ DAMAGE

It's natural to be apprehensive when pain is felt.
But, here's the great news:

Pain is a signal, not necessarily a sign of damage.

Misinterpreting the meaning of your pain as harmful or having negative thoughts about healing tissues can oftentimes lead to catastrophizing.

“Not only are its effects realized psychologically, but emerging evidence shows that those thoughts increase pain receptor sensitivity, increasing vigilance of the brain's pain alarm system.

MOVEMENT = MEDICINE

Rehab isn't just about what happens during clinic sessions

– it's about understanding your pain, rebuilding trust in your body, and practicing the appropriate movements at appropriate times.

Clinic sessions = the blueprint

Prescribed exercise = building blocks for success

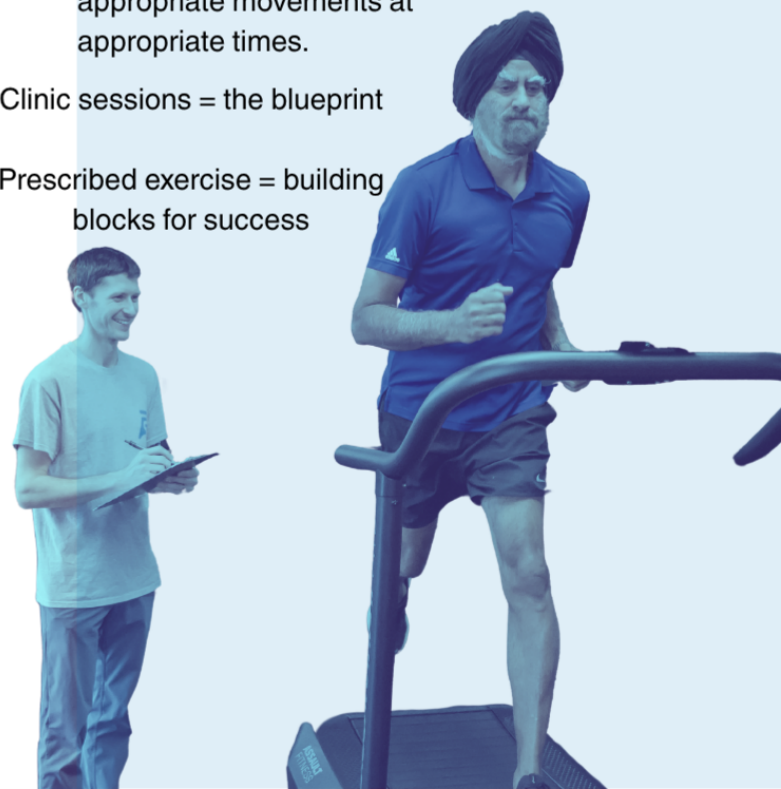
“I'll never get better”

“pain must mean I'm causing tissue damage”

“I shouldn't move because I'm hurt”



– some examples of the spiraling negativity that can be dangerously counterproductive to our musculoskeletal rehabilitation



with
CONFIDENCE

Pain, Healing, & Your Home Exercises

Forza Physio

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

1. Rate your baseline pain
2. Identify 1-3 activities you wish to engage in more (daily activities, gym, or sports)
3. Create a “harm check”
4. Perform activities
5. Reassess and follow corresponding protocol

GREEN LIGHT

Load is being tolerated

Sensations

- No change in range, strength, or function
- Pain 4–7/10 during activity
- Pain doesn't worsen after activity
- Returns to baseline within:
 - 30 min (4–8 weeks post-onset)
 - 2 h (8–16 weeks)
 - 24 h (16 weeks +)

Action

- Gradually rebuild function/load
- Add 1–5 % more activity per session

YELLOW LIGHT

Too much too fast!

Sensations

- No change in range, strength, or function
- Pain 4–7/10 during activity
- Pain ↑ 3 points above baseline for:
 - 2 h (4–8 weeks)
 - 24 h (8–16 weeks)
 - 48 h (16 weeks +)

Action

- Continue activity
- Use flare-up toolbox (see further)
 - Bandaid fixes: Ice 30 min × 3–4/day, pain meds as needed
 - Systemic solutions:
 - Modify/rest/reduce duration
 - Avoid new activities
 - Keep positive mindset (avoid catastrophizing)
 - Spread activity through week

RED LIGHT

Sensations

Major loss of range, strength, or function
Severe pain ≥ 7/10 → unable to continue
Pain lasts days/weeks

Action

Stop activity

Reach out to us to reassess and make further modifications if necessary.

“HARM-CHECK”

Pain can oftentimes be misinterpreted/catastrophized, when in fact there exists a variety of its possible triggers.

Amidst this noise, it is important to get your bearings through a harm check—a personalized assessment of movement, strength, and function relevant to your pain area—to allow you to more accurately assess the true extent of injuries.



A harm check is a movement or sequence of movements you can perform confidently upon initial onset of pain.

When you suspect you've done too much, use your harm check.

This approach helps you trust your body's signals and move forward with confidence.

HANDLING FLARE-UPS

When symptoms indicate a yellow light, it is important to continue with activities while holding off introducing novel stimuli and progression of current activity intensity/duration.

Furthermore, distributing activities across the week is key to avoid exacerbating flare-ups



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Acute (single-session) spikes in activity load relative to the long-term context of an existing regimen have been associated with higher rates of injuries with athletes across many sports. In a running study tracking 5,205 runners across 588,000+ individual sessions over 18 months, researchers found single workouts exceeding 10% of the longest run in the previous month raised injury risk significantly. Minor spikes raised risk by 64%, and major spikes—more than doubling the longest recent run—raised risk by 128% (Frandsen 2025).

Ancillary measures can include medication for pain management, as well as anti-inflammatory interventions—those can include compressive dressing, and icing.

Lastly, as emphasized earlier, it is important to not catastrophize the pain. Keeping your thoughts and language positive is important, as negative thinking can only serve to amplify sensitivity.

Relaxation strategies—such as calming music, mindful breathing, and imagining of pleasant scenery—can help alleviate the dwelling of pain.

