

Monitoring and Coping with Change

Living with your physical disability is a lifelong journey, with highs and lows. Everybody feels the impacts of ageing as they get older.

While most people begin to feel the impacts of ageing in their 60s, people with a physical disability often begin to feel tired and sore earlier and may start to slow down much earlier in life, some as early as their 30s.

Many people living with a physical disability comment that they wish they had known what was going to happen and wanted more information to help them prepare.



Monitoring

Some changes and progressions are known. Exactly when they occur is different. Some changes are quick. For most, the changes happen slowly and are only noticed when they stop you doing something you really enjoy.

If changes are picked up early, the amount they progress can be reduced. Regular monitoring of your abilities and what your body can do helps pick up the changes and provide you with ideas of what you can do to slow the progression.

Important: while most changes happens slowly, if you have a sudden change in what you can do, you need to take action as soon as possible. Speak to your GP or therapy team immediately.



Coping with change

Coping with change is hard for most people. Like many people with physical disabilities, you and your family have probably spent your years as a child trying to walk or transfer and to live as independently as possible. For some, you have tried very hard hoping that you won't need to use equipment while others may have happily embraced equipment to help.

Whatever you have been doing, despite all your efforts you find that you are now struggling to do the things you want to. You may be tired and sore. Those who support you may have as much invested in your independence as you do and may struggle with the changes you are going through as well.

Monitoring and Coping with Change cont.

Being prepared

Being prepared for what may happen to your body can help you cope with the changes. Catching changes early can also help slow progression so that you can do the things that you want to. Understanding what your body is going through and looking at different ways to do things can also help you to cope with changes.



What does independence mean to you?

Independence means something different to different people. There is no right or wrong answer. For some, independence is being able to physically do everything by themselves and for others, independence is feeling in control or 'in charge' of things happening in their lives; others feel a sense of independence somewhere in between.

It is interesting to note that:

- People who do everything themselves, without support, often find it harder to cope with changes and experience more soreness and fatigue while people who accept help are less sore and tired and can generally cope better
- Wear and tear on the body generally appears to be less in those who accept help compared to those who don't
- People who accept help often have more energy to get out and about doing the things they enjoy and seeing other people

Have a think about what independence means to you. Share this with those who support you.

Visit futurethinking.abilitycentre.com.au for more information.

