

TIPS FOR GETTING BACK TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Look at the suggestions below and think about what areas you would like to include in your daily life.

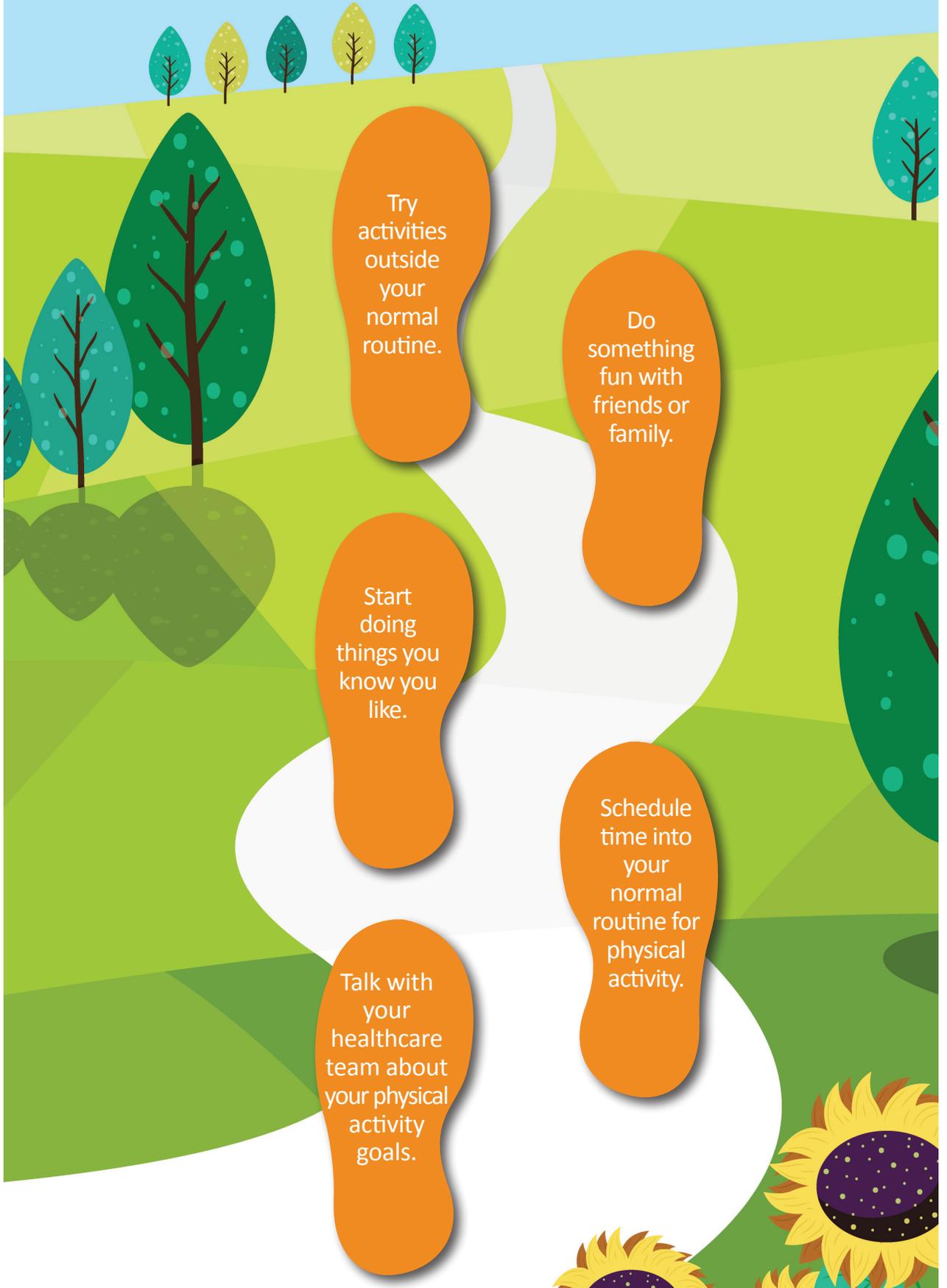
Try activities outside your normal routine.

Do something fun with friends or family.

Start doing things you know you like.

Schedule time into your normal routine for physical activity.

Talk with your healthcare team about your physical activity goals.



MOTION IS LOTION

You may be worried that physical activity will make your pain worse, but movement can lessen your pain. Physical activity helps ease muscle stiffness and improves your mobility. It can also help control your weight, lift your mood, and help you sleep better.

If you feel pain or discomfort when beginning physical activity, remember that you are **sore but safe**. What this means is that having pain does not mean you have an injury. Your body is just being extra cautious and sounding the alarms. When coming back to physical activity, you will have some pain or discomfort and this is normal. If you **go low and slow** and gradually increase the intensity of your activity over many months, then you will be able to do the things you want to do again and gradually reduce your pain.

Following some of the tips on the first page is a good way to start increasing your physical activity again. Use the worksheet on the next page to plan some activities based on the tips. It's also worth remembering the following things while you are being active.

THINGS TO REMEMBER WHILE BEING ACTIVE

› REMEMBER TO...

- **Start low and go slow** - when starting a new activity, start at a slower pace than you think you can do. Work up to more intense paces over the course of weeks to months.
- **Focus on your breathing** - pay attention to your breathing as you do challenging physical activity. If you notice that you hold your breath, slow down the activity.
- **Tune in to your body** - and notice all the things it experiences besides pain like feeling the lengthening and straightening of your spine and paying attention to the movement of your muscles.
- **Be aware of any pain, but don't focus on it** - it is normal to pay attention to pain, but refocus your attention to other parts of your body if this happens. Notice where you may be feeling more tension and work on relaxing those parts, or just focus on breathing again.
- **Relax your muscles** - pay attention to parts of your body that are always tense and try to let them loosen up. Often this means relaxing your jaw muscles, or letting your shoulders drop when they aren't in use.

For more information on physical and occupational therapy, as well as pain management related to physical activity, check out <https://www.spine-health.com/treatment/pain-management/physical-and-occupational-therapy-offer-benefits-neuropathic-pain>.

