

Am I really safe to move?



True or false: Being in pain means you should stop exercise and activity.

Guess what? The answer is actually *false*. While it might feel natural to stop moving when you have pain, gentle movement is usually exactly what your body needs.

If you're reading this, you have some recent muscle or joint pain or injury. While we wish you weren't in pain, we're glad you're here and in good hands. Hinge Health's exercise therapy program is carefully designed to reduce your pain and help you recover.

“But isn’t exercise going to make it worse?”

It's normal to wonder if it's safe to be active. After all, we've often been told to rest until pain goes away. So, is movement really safe right now? *Yes*.

When you signed up for Hinge Health, you completed an application about your symptoms and medical history. Hinge Health carefully reviews your application and movement assessment to make sure you're safe to move and tailors your program to your specific needs and goals. Getting access to your Hinge Health exercises means you've been assessed and approved to start gentle exercise therapy.

If your condition has changed significantly since you applied, message or schedule a video visit with your physical therapist (PT) to discuss your situation.

Quiet your pain alarm

Think of your nervous system as an alarm. Its job is to protect you from danger. After an injury or recent pain, this alarm rings a little louder, alerting you to movements it perceives as potentially harmful. This is why everyday activities, like walking or bending, might suddenly feel uncomfortable. But **gentle, consistent movement can help quiet this alarm**. By gradually challenging your body with safe movements, you reassure your nervous system that it's safe. Movement does this by:

- Easing inflammation and reducing swelling
- Boosting blood flow, which helps your body heal faster
- Keeping your muscles strong and joints flexible, reducing stiffness and pain
- Lowering stress and anxiety, improving your overall mood and health
- Building confidence that your body is strong and capable

Designed to help you heal

Your Hinge Health exercises are carefully selected and **tailored for your pain and goals**. Exercises start gently, building your mobility, strength, and flexibility step by step.

Each session is designed to gradually help your body heal without ringing your body's pain alarm too much. Some pain is expected in the beginning, so it's important to remind yourself that activities can be uncomfortable and still be very safe.

You can give us feedback after each exercise session, and we'll adjust your next session accordingly. With consistent practice, your body will learn that movement is safe, helping you feel better and move more confidently. Plus, the more you learn about pain, the more you'll be convinced that it really is safe to move — even when you're in pain.

Guidance from your dedicated Hinge Health PT is always available. Message them if you have any questions about your exercises, recovery, or progress.

If there's one thing to remember, it's this: **Your road to recovery starts (and *continues*) with movement.**

Key Takeaways

1. Movement is often safe and essential for healing, even when you have pain.
2. Gentle exercises help your body recover better than complete rest.
3. Your Hinge Health physical therapist is always available for support.

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Toss the 'RICE' for recovery



Heard of the RICE method for recovering from an injury? It stands for **Rest**, **Ice**, **Compression**, and **Elevation** — and was once standard care. But we now know that too much rest can actually slow healing. Instead, newer guidelines suggest following PEACE and LOVE.

Groovy, right? Let's dig into what these actually mean.

PEACE

PEACE stands for **P**rotect, **E**levate, **A**void anti-inflammatories (initially), **C**ompress, and **E**ducate. This method is most useful right after an injury and for the next two to three days. You don't need to follow all of these steps; choose the ones that work for you and are appropriate for your situation.

- **Protect** the injured area by scaling back on activity — instead of avoiding movement entirely.
- **Elevate** the injured area to reduce pain, throbbing, and swelling.
- **Avoid** anti-inflammatories (such as ibuprofen). Emerging research shows it may be better to allow inflammation after injury because it's part of healing. However, pain medications can be helpful — and many doctors and guidelines utilize them. This can be a little confusing. If anti-inflammatory pain meds can help relieve your discomfort such that it's easier to move, sleep, and work, then it's probably fine to take them in limited amounts as needed.
- **Compress** the injured area with an elastic bandage or sleeve to reduce swelling.
- **Educate** yourself on the benefits of active recovery methods, such as movement and exercise therapy (what you're doing right now).

LOVE

The LOVE method comes after you've followed PEACE. It stands for **L**oad (gentle movement), **O**ptimism, **V**ascularization (blood flow), and **E**xercise.

If you're dealing with new pain — but don't suspect an injury — you can skip PEACE and just start with LOVE.

- **Load** the injured area by gradually returning to normal activities. Some pain is okay, but it should not exceed an acceptable level for you.

- **Optimism** involves believing that you have the capacity to heal and can return to meaningful activities. This isn't about forcing positivity, but recognizing that mindset can help recovery.
- **Vascularization** (blood flow) means increasing blood flow to the painful area by engaging in gentle movement, such as walking, biking, or swimming.
- **Exercise**, or an active approach to recovery, restores mobility and strength. Use pain as a guide to gradually progress your exercise and increase difficulty.

Rethinking rest

The main difference between RICE and PEACE and LOVE is **less emphasis on rest**. For example, bed rest is no longer recommended after hip or knee replacements — people are often walking within hours of surgery because early movement helps with recovery.

Similarly, protecting an injury is a more helpful way to frame recovery than only resting it. If you hurt your ankle playing soccer, you can take a temporary break from soccer. But it's important to find other ways to move your ankle, like using the stairs and walking.

You might also wonder: what about ice? Ice can hinder inflammation, which plays a role in healing. That's why PEACE and LOVE recommend using ice less often, similar to anti-inflammatory medications. Still, if ice feels good, helps relieve pain, and makes it easier for you to move around, it's okay to use it occasionally and in moderation.

A different approach

PEACE and LOVE helps you think beyond what to avoid, and focus on what to *add* to support your body's natural healing process. Factors like education, optimism, and progressive movement improve recovery and keep you moving forward.

Key Takeaways

1. PEACE and LOVE is a new approach for injuries and pain instead of the RICE method.
2. The main difference is less emphasis on rest.
3. PEACE and LOVE promote gentle movement, education, and a positive mindset.

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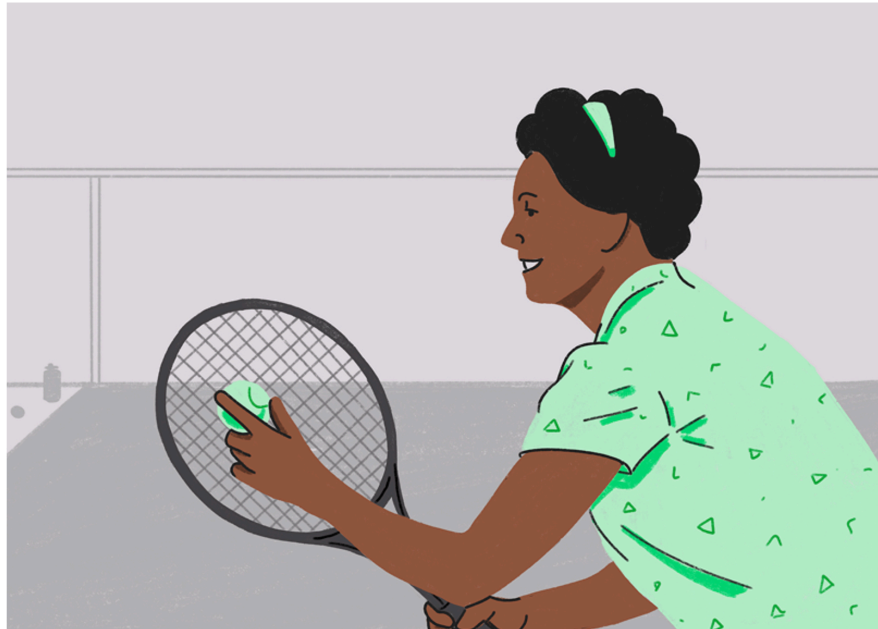
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Getting back to sports and workouts



You probably didn't join Hinge Health just to *reduce pain*. You joined to get back in the game. Whether it's gardening, pickleball, hiking, or getting through a workday comfortably — you want less pain because you want your life back.

That's why one of the most common questions we hear is: “*When can I get back to [insert favorite activity]?*” Especially when it comes to sports or workouts.

The answer? Often sooner than you think.

Timing is everything

Many people think they need to be 100% pain-free before returning to more vigorous physical activity. But that's an outdated idea. In fact, **getting back to the things you enjoy — even with some discomfort — is part of how you heal.**

As Hinge Health advisor and physical therapist Greg Lehman says, “*The doing is the fixing.*”

With a thoughtful plan and a little patience, you can safely return to activities that make you happy. And reconnecting with hobbies or social events can boost your mood and confidence — both of which support healing.

Make your gameplan

Not sure where to start? Message your Hinge Health physical therapist (PT). They can help you create a plan tailored to your injury and goals. Here are a few general tips to guide you:

- 1. Ease back in gradually.** Start with shorter or less intense versions of your usual routine. For example, if you normally run 3 miles, try a brisk walk or a slow jog.
- 2. Modify when needed.** If your pre-injury activity is higher-impact (like basketball or HIIT classes), try lower-impact options like biking, swimming, or walking. As you build strength and confidence, reintroduce higher-impact movements gradually: short drills, modified versions of your sport, or shorter class segments.
- 3. Stay active in any form.** Light movement like walking, stretching, or yoga helps maintain strength, flexibility, and circulation — all of which support healing.
- 4. Stick with your Hinge Health exercises.** Even if you're back to your usual activities, your Hinge

Health program helps you stay strong and avoid reinjury. Keep it up as part of your routine.

5. **Prioritize consistency over intensity.** Steady, regular movement is more effective for recovery than sporadic, high-intensity efforts.

6. **Incorporate rest and recovery.** Adequate rest (including sleep and active rest days) is as important as activity for healing. Here's a reminder that you may need more rest/recovery than usual when dealing with pain or injury.

Helpful mindset shifts

Getting back to activity can feel intimidating. Keep this in mind:

- **It's normal to slow down at first.** Many people reduce activity after an injury. That's okay. What matters most is starting again when you're ready.
- **Movement is safe.** A large study on back pain showed that people who stayed active — even with some pain — didn't cause more harm. In fact, movement helped them feel better.
- **You don't need to wait for zero pain.** Most people return to their regular activity level within 12 months, even if they still have some pain. (And with Hinge Health, you may get there much sooner.) The key is starting small and progressing gradually.
- **Use a time-based approach.** Choose a time or distance goal for your activity (like walking for 10 minutes), rather than waiting to feel "pain-free" to start moving. Focusing on building up what you can do rather than waiting for total relief helps improve your function, build resilience, and avoid setbacks.
- **Expect some soreness.** It's normal to feel sore or have a temporary increase in pain when returning to activity. This doesn't mean you've done harm — it's your body adapting. Soreness usually fades within 24–48 hours.

That said, if something feels off or you're unsure, reach out to your Hinge Health physical therapist (PT). They're here to help you navigate those moments and adjust your plan if needed.

Act like an athlete

You joined Hinge Health to get back to doing what you love. If you're itching to get back in the game, that's a great sign. Even pro athletes return to activity in stages. You can do the same. It might take a few weeks or months to feel "back to normal," but every walk, stretch, and workout gets you closer.

Key Takeaways

1. Movement is part of the healing process, not something you wait to do *after* recovery.
2. A gradual return to activity builds confidence, strength, and helps prevent setbacks.
3. Your Hinge Health physical therapist can help tailor a plan to get you back in the game.

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