

Pain Monitoring Guide

Know your zones. Read your body. Load with confidence.

What Pain Actually Means in Tendinopathy

In tendinopathy, pain does not necessarily mean damage. Tendons can be painful without being acutely injured, and they can feel better long before they are fully healed. Pain is the tendon's way of communicating — and learning to interpret that signal is one of the most powerful tools you have in recovery.

The goal is not to eliminate all pain before you move. The goal is to use pain as information — to load smartly, monitor your response, and adjust from there.

Pain Is Feedback — Not Failure

Some discomfort during tendon loading is expected and acceptable.

The question is not 'does it hurt?' but 'how much, and how does it respond?'

Pain that settles within 24 hours after activity is generally a safe signal to continue.

Pain that worsens during activity or lingers the next day is a signal to reduce load.

Your Three Zones

Use this framework every day — before exercise, during activity, and the following morning. Knowing your zone tells you what to do next.

<input type="checkbox"/> GREEN	<input type="checkbox"/> YELLOW	<input type="checkbox"/> RED
0–2/10. No pain or barely noticeable.	3–4/10. Noticeable but manageable.	5+/10. Significant or worsening.
<input type="checkbox"/> Load as planned.	<input type="triangle-up"/> Continue, watch the 24-hr response.	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce load. Reassess.

The 24–48 Hour Rule

This is the most important monitoring tool you have. It is more informative than how you feel during a session.

How to use it

After any exercise or high-demand activity, check your pain level the next morning.

Same or better than before? You are in a safe loading range. Keep going.

Noticeably worse? You loaded too much. Reduce intensity or volume next session — but do not stop.

Significantly worse for more than 48 hours? Drop back to your starting point and let your clinician know.

This rule protects you from two common mistakes: doing too much too soon (ignoring the signal), or doing too little for too long (not loading at all because of fear of pain).

Using a Pain Scale (0–10)

A simple 0–10 pain scale is the most practical tool for monitoring. Here is how to interpret it for tendinopathy:

Score	What It Feels Like	What to Do
0	No pain at all	Keep loading as planned
1–2	Barely noticeable — more of an awareness than pain	Keep going — this is the sweet spot
3–4	Noticeable but tolerable — you could keep going	Continue, but monitor the 24-hr response carefully
5–6	Moderate — distracting, affecting how you move	Reduce load or stop this exercise today
7–10	High pain — significant, could be alarming	Stop. Rest. Contact your clinician if persistent

Common Questions

Is some pain during exercise okay?

Yes — up to 4/10 during tendon loading is generally acceptable, provided it settles within 24 hours afterward. Waiting for zero pain before you start is not necessary and often delays recovery.

Should I push through pain?

Not blindly. Use your zone and the 24-hour rule together. If you are in the Yellow Zone and pain settles the next morning, you made a good call. If pain keeps climbing during a session, stop — that is the Red Zone.

What if my pain varies a lot day to day?

That is normal for tendinopathy. Day-to-day fluctuation does not mean your treatment is not working. Look at the trend over weeks, not individual days. Week 4 should generally feel better than Week 1 — even if Thursday felt worse than Monday.

What if I flare after a session?

Reduce the load next time — but do not stop entirely. A flare tells you the dose was too high, not that loading is wrong. Return to the previous level that felt manageable, and progress more slowly from there.

How do I know if I am progressing?

Signs of progress: Your Green Zone activities are expanding. You can do more before reaching Yellow. Your morning pain on active days is lower than it was a few weeks ago. You think about your tendon less during the day.

Weekly Pain Log

Print and fill this in each day. One week of data is worth more than your memory of "how things have been going."

Day	Pain Before (0–10)	Activity / Exercise	Pain During (0–10)	Pain Next Day (0–10)	Zone & Notes
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

Tip: Bring this to your appointments. Patterns in your log help your clinician make better decisions about your program.

The Monitoring Mindset

- Check your zone before you load.
- Track how you feel the next morning.
- Adjust — but never quit.
- "Pain is feedback, not failure."