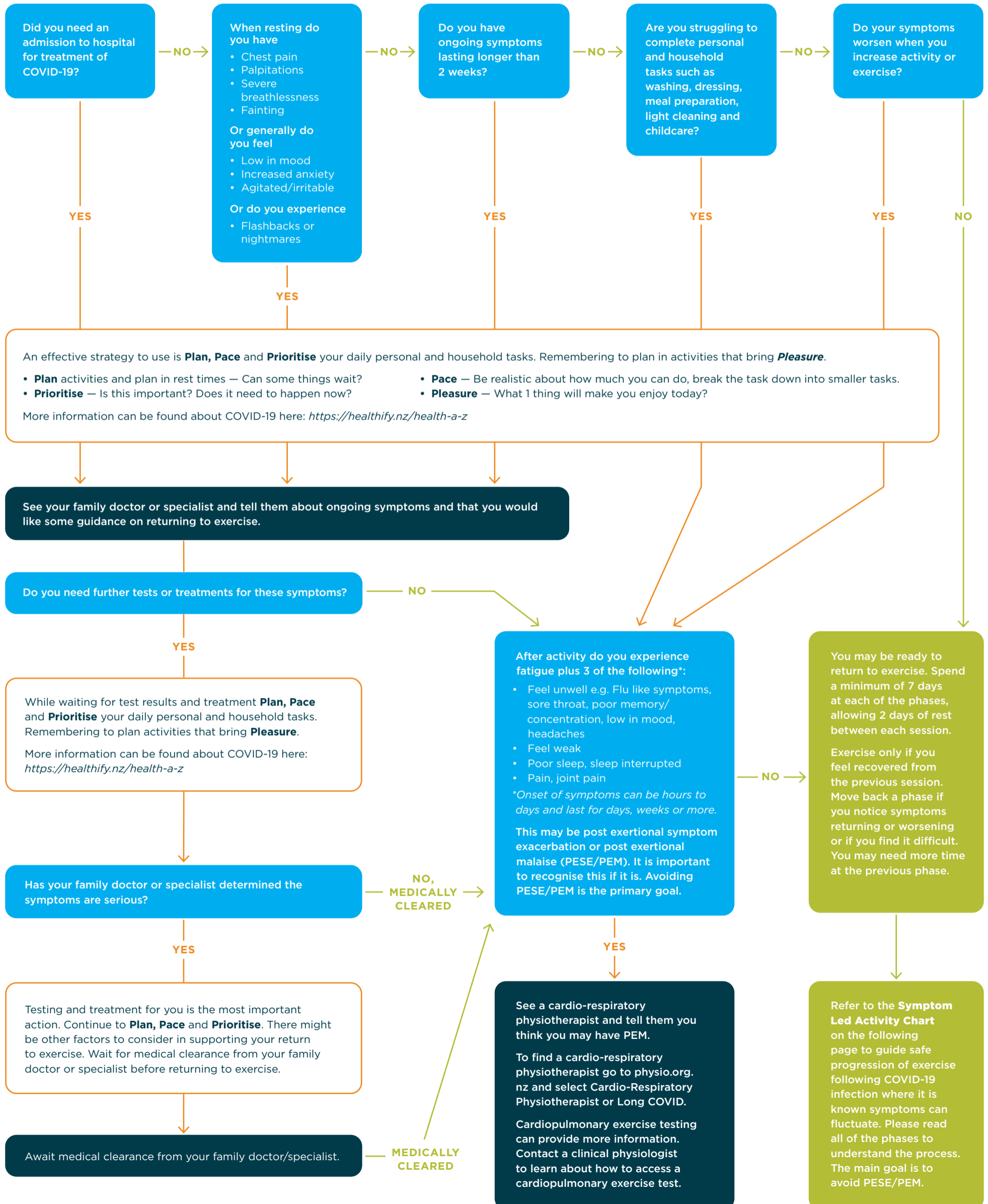


# Returning to functional activities and exercise after COVID-19



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## Symptom Led Activity Chart

	Phase 1 ↔	Phase 2 ↔	Phase 3 ↔	Phase 4 ↔	Phase 5
Activity	At this phase you prioritise home based rest, breathing exercises and gentle stretches.	At this phase you move to a low intensity activity or exercise. E.g. Gentle walking e.g. 2 minutes on flat ground.	At this phase you move to moderate intensity aerobic exercise and strengthening exercises. E.g. 2 sets of 5 minute blocks of aerobic exercise with a rest in between the sets.	At Phase 4 you can continue aerobic exercises and strengthening and introduce co-ordination exercises. E.g. 3 sets of 5 minute blocks, progressing up to 6 sets of 5 minute blocks. The rest time can slowly be decreased as your fitness improves to progress to 30 minutes.	At Phase 5 there is an expectation that you can return to normal activities and exercise.
Intensity	This period of time is to rest and allow your body time to heal.	You can talk in full sentences, it's not especially hard to exercise and you feel like you could continue to exercise.	You are able to talk in full sentences, it's not especially hard and you feel like you could continue to exercise.	You are able to talk in full sentences, it's not especially hard and you feel like you can continue to exercise.	You are able to talk and feel sweaty whilst doing these activities. When you work harder, it feels harder and you feel tired but you don't have any great difficulties.  You may only be able to speak 1 word at a time when you work hard. If this feels too much, stop, catch your breath and reduce how hard you are working as you continue to exercise.
What can I do next?	If you have current symptoms at rest this may not be the right time for you to start an exercise programme.  When you have been symptom-free for at least 7 days progress to Phase 2.	If symptoms return or worsen return to Phase 1, allowing at least 2 days rest and not commencing until you feel recovered from Phase 2.  If there is no return or worsening of symptoms and you have completed this phase for at least 14 days, progress to Phase 3.	If symptoms return or worsen return to Phase 2, allowing at least 2 days rest and not commencing until you feel recovered from Phase 3.  If you feel you have recovered within an hour of the activity, you can trial another 5 minute block of aerobic exercise when you next exercise, with a rest. If there is no return of symptoms and you have completed this phase for at least 7 days, move to Phase 4.	If symptoms return or worsen, return to Phase 3 allowing at least 2 days rest and not commencing until you feel recovered from Phase 4.  If there are no return of symptoms and you have completed this phase for at least 7 days, progress to Phase 5.	If symptoms return or worsen, return to Phase 4, allowing at least 2 days rest and not commencing until you feel recovered from Phase 5.  If there are no return of symptoms, then continue.

Disclaimer: This document has been written to support a return to exercise for people with Long COVID living in New Zealand. It is intended as a guide only, the decision to return to exercise is yours alone, and not a substitute for treatment from a health practitioner. For further advice please refer to a qualified cardio-respiratory physiotherapist. The content was finalised on 21 May 2023 using current evidence and will be reviewed as new evidence is available.

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