

Thomas Moore: From the debilitating fatigue of ME (myalgic encephalopathy) to the bustle of the career woman, Azreen Shatar partly attributes her recovery to gradually increasing her daily activity and she welcomes new research showing that tailored exercise can significantly help sufferers.

Azreen: There were times when it was really bad, but what I had to do was really understand what I could do and gradually build that up over time and not push myself too much.

Moore: A study by the medical research council found around 60% of patients given a graded exercise programme or a talking therapy significantly improved. Around 29% were able to return to normal activity, that's twice as effective as other tested treatments and they didn't cause any harm.

Researcher: Our hope is the evidence from this trial which is the largest trial that has been done in these conditions, it gives some solid evidence about what treatments help, and importantly that those treatments are safe, people have quite rightly been unclear what treatments help and worried whether they're safe. This trial should answer those concerns.

Moore: But the study has angered some patients, even a laptop is too heavy for Annette Barclay to carry. She tried an exercise programme, it made her worse and she fears other patients could now be damaged.

Annette: The evidence just isn't there and patients could be harmed by this. When drugs go through their manufacturers they've got to be shown to be safe and there's nothing here that shows us that graded exercise and CVT (cardiovascular training) are safe for patients.

Moore: A quarter of a million people in Britain suffer from ME. While the research has been widely welcome by medical experts, not all patients are convinced. ME is as controversial as ever.

Thomas Moore, Skynews.