

Managing Flare-ups

You will no doubt have experienced times when your pain and fatigue have got worse and you are unable to do the normal things you would do. This is called a “flare-up” which means a temporary increase in your unpleasant symptoms.

We hope that by learning to manage your pain and fatigue, you will experience less flare-ups, but unfortunately these do happen. Flare-ups can be brought on by overdoing it, or by stressful circumstances. It is not always possible to avoid flare-ups so it is good to have a plan of how you will handle it if it happens.

So what is the best way to handle these flare-ups?



Firstly – **DON'T PANIC!!** Remember that every flare-up has a flare-down.

Here are some things you may want to consider:

- **Reduce your sitting, standing and walking levels.**
Whatever your normal limit is for how long you can sit, stand or walk, reduce it. You can gradually increase these limits as your flare-up subsides.
- **Review your pacing**
Have another look at what you are doing and increase your rest breaks. Think about the advice on managing activities that your therapist will have discussed with you, to remind you what to consider and gain some fresh ideas.
- **Prioritise what needs to be done.**
You can't do as much, so prioritise what is really important for now.
- **Continue to stretch/exercise if possible, but reduce the amount**
It is important to keep moving, but reduce the exercise you normally do to comfortable levels. You can gradually build this back up again once the flare-up improves.
- **Increase your relaxation**
If you normally use relaxation then increase it. If you don't then it might be worth having another look at it. Ask your therapist for more information on managing stress and relaxation.



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- **Use what helps**

You probably have a range of things that help you, like heat packs, TENS, having a bath, or something else. During this time, use those things more often.

- **Take any flare-up medication you have been prescribed**

If you have been prescribed medication to help you when your pain is worse, then you may want to use this while you are suffering with more pain. Try and reduce it again once the pain starts to ease though, otherwise it won't be useful for those times when you have a flare-up.

- **Accept more help**

It can be hard to accept help that is offered, and even harder to ask for help, but when you are having a flare-up, this can be part of your plan. Once you start to pick up again you can reduce the amount of help that you need from others.



- **Set small realistic goals**

As you are going to be more limited, your goals need to reflect what you can do at the moment. Set small, realistic goals so that you feel you are making progress. If you have larger goals you are working towards, you can get back on track once the flare-up is reducing.



- **Keep a record of what helped, so you can learn from it**

Often it is possible to identify what caused the flare-up and it is useful to learn from this. Sometimes it is useful to talk to the people around you as they often notice what you have been doing that may have caused the flare-up. If there are things that really help you when you have your flare-up, keep a note of this for future use.

- **Plan a reward for your flare-down**

It can be hard to stay positive when you are going through a flare-up, so planning something nice to do for when your flare-up improves can help. This can be very simple but it will feel very rewarding when you manage to do it.

Over to You

It is really useful to have a flare-up plan. This is like a toolbox of things you can use when you are having a flare-up. Think about what sort of things you may put in your plan. We have given some examples.

What I could do	How this would help
<i>Use ready meals, or easy to prepare meals.</i>	<i>I won't have to cook for the family which is really hard when I'm tired and can't stand for long.</i>
<i>Ask friends to do the school runs for me.</i>	<i>I can't walk to school when I'm bad. This means I can rest more.</i>
<i>Use my TENS machine at work.</i>	<i>TENS helps me and when I'm bad I want to keep working if I can.</i>

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