



# Managing flare-ups

Information for patients  
Pain Management Services





## MANAGING FLARE-UP

It is normal when living with persistent pain to experience fluctuations in the intensity of pain.

Flare-ups are common and may last for a few days or be more prolonged lasting several weeks. They usually settle with time and do not indicate worsening of any underlying condition. It is important to manage your flare-ups with knowledge and not be too frightened of them.

### CAUSES OF FLARE-UP

It is important to realize that there may be no trigger and a flare-up can occur for no reason. Sometimes though, it may have occurred because you decided to risk it in order to achieve an important goal.

Other contributing factors can include:

- ◆ Under activity
- ◆ Over activity
- ◆ Taking on a new exercise/activity
- ◆ Reduced or imbalanced fitness
- ◆ Poor postures
- ◆ Ill health
- ◆ Stress

## MANAGING FLARE-UP

- ◆ Avoid prolonged bed rest (no more than 24hrs)
- ◆ Maintain gentle exercise
- ◆ Take regular pain medication
- ◆ Use heat/ice
- ◆ Use TENS
- ◆ Continue with daily activities but break up with frequent short rests
- ◆ Practice relaxation to de-stress and reduce tension
- ◆ Use Distraction techniques
- ◆ Use mindfulness skills to develop awareness of the present moment and make more self-compassionate choices
- ◆ Control your breathing
- ◆ Communicate with family, friends or colleagues – you don't have to feel alone
- ◆ DON'T PANIC – challenge negative thinking, so that you are able to think clearly – the pain will lessen

## AVOIDING FLARE-UP

It is not always possible to avoid flare-up as previously mentioned there may be no trigger. However there are some lifestyle changes which help to lessen the episodes such as:

- ◆ Planning activities
- ◆ Pacing activities and exercise
- ◆ Avoid overdoing things on good days
- ◆ Maintaining fitness and correct posture
- ◆ Managing stress
- ◆ Balanced regular diet
- ◆ Taking prescribed medication regularly
- ◆ Setting realistic goals

## USEFUL BOOKS

- ◆ Mindfulness for Health – a practical guide to Relieving Pain, reducing stress and restoring wellbeing. *Vidyamala Burch and Danny Penman (2013)*
- ◆ Coping Successfully with Pain. *Neville Shone (1992)*  
*London: Sheldon Press. ISBN 0-85969-640-5*
- ◆ Living well with pain and illness: the mindful way to free yourself from suffering. *Vidyamala Burch (2008)*. *Piatkus books.*
- ◆ Living beyond your pain: Using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy to ease chronic pain. *Joanne Dahl and Tobias Lundgren (2006)*. *New Harbinger Publications.*

## DIRECT LINKS TO RELAXATION

- ◆ [www.asph.mobi/relaxation.mp3](http://www.asph.mobi/relaxation.mp3)
- ◆ [www.asph.mobi/relaxation.wma](http://www.asph.mobi/relaxation.wma)
- ◆ [www.asph.mobi/autogenic\\_relaxation.mp3](http://www.asph.mobi/autogenic_relaxation.mp3)
- ◆ [www.asph.mobi/autogenic\\_relaxation.wma](http://www.asph.mobi/autogenic_relaxation.wma)

## USEFUL WEBSITES

### Mindfulness

- ◆ [www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk](http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk)
- ◆ [www.mindfulnesscompassion.org](http://www.mindfulnesscompassion.org)
- ◆ [www.freemindfulness.org](http://www.freemindfulness.org)

### Pain

- ◆ [www.action-on-pain.co.uk](http://www.action-on-pain.co.uk)  
(*"PainLine" is open 10-4pm Monday to Friday on 0845 6031593*)
- ◆ [www.painconcern.org.uk](http://www.painconcern.org.uk)
- ◆ [www.britishpainsociety.org](http://www.britishpainsociety.org)
- ◆ [www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org)



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