

Keep positive – it is normal during a flare up to experience feelings of frustration, anger and low mood. It is not nice going through a flare-up, however the more accepting you are of flare-ups and the more positive you feel about managing them when they happen, the better your outcome is likely to be. Try to stop negative thoughts and change them for positive ones. Remember the flare-up is **temporary** and it will get better!

Please always consult with your GP if you have concerns or if you have a new pain which is different to your normal persistent pain.

References:

A guide to managing pain by Liz Macleod, Pain Concern  
[www.painconcern.org.uk](http://www.painconcern.org.uk)

The Pain Toolkit Pete Moore & Dr Frances Cole, 2013  
[www.paintoolkit.org](http://www.paintoolkit.org)

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# Managing Pain Flare Up

## Patient Information Leaflet

**Community Pain Management Service**

**01482 344294**



Providing Quality Care



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## Accepting flare-ups as part of persistent pain

Pain flare-ups are a part of persistent pain and you may find you still have flare-ups from time to time, even when you have begun to manage your pain better. Often flare-ups can lead people to give up on their usual activity - rest, take pain relief medication and wait for the pain to subside – however flare-ups may take days or weeks to settle. This in itself can be frustrating and it can quickly begin to feel like the pain is ‘in control’ of you again. Accepting that a flare-up is a part of persistent pain, is important in then being able to manage it effectively. Accepting the flare-up in this way may prevent you feeling too frustrated and annoyed; emotions which in themselves can exacerbate pain, and instead you can find ways to manage the increase in pain.

## What triggers your flare-ups?

It can be really helpful to try and notice when you have flare-ups – think about what you have been doing that day or on the days preceding the pain increasing. Have you done anything differently or out of the ordinary? Is there a particular activity (or inactivity!) that you have done recently which may have triggered the flare-up? Sometimes flare-up triggers are easy to spot and other times you may not be able to figure out the cause of increased pain. Keeping a diary of your activities and pain scores can help. Looking back over this when a flare-up occurs can help you work out what may have triggered it.

If you do notice a pattern in something you are doing and then having increased pain, it is then easier to do something about it – you will be able to recognise what you may need to try and do differently, and therefore prevent further flare-ups from occurring.

## Tips on managing flare-ups

**Cut down on activity, *but not fully*** – it is still really important to keep moving. Stopping activity altogether during a flare up is more likely to prolong the increased pain as your joints and muscles will quickly become deconditioned due to the reduced activity. If you need to sit/lay and rest then do so, but make sure you get up and move about often too, to reduce stiffness. You may need to ask for help from family or friends when going through a flare-up. Remember a flare-up may last for a few weeks, so you will need to gradually increase your activities back to your usual levels as the pain reduces.

**Use your pain relief methods** – what have you found works for you to ease your pain? It may be heat or cold therapy, TENs machine, medication, hot baths etc. Try to relax, doing things you enjoy, listening to music or reading perhaps. Maybe going to the hydrotherapy pool or having a massage will help. If your muscles do spasm and joints are stiff, a Jacuzzi or Hydrotherapy pool can be very soothing as the very warm water relaxes your muscles and improves flexibility in the joints. ***Relaxation techniques and distraction*** may also be beneficial during flare-ups. Muscles naturally become tight and tense when experiencing pain. Therefore relaxation techniques can help you to focus your body on relaxing and relieving tension and stress in the body and mind. Try to take your mind away from the pain by focussing on something else, like doing something you enjoy or thinking about a happy or positive time when you felt good. Use a combination of techniques if needed and remember to do what works for you!