

Pain Management - how to manage a flare up of pain

Chronic Pain Management Services

Introduction

The aim of this leaflet is to give you some information about managing a flare up of pain.

What is a flare up?

A flare up is part of a chronic pain problem. The pain will increase and could last for days, weeks, or months. Accepting the presence of pain is useful in itself. View the flare-up as part of the problem – a real nuisance but not something to worry about. By doing this you will be able to work at managing the situation more effectively by yourself.

Remember – a flare up will settle and you will get through it.

What triggers a flare up of my pain?

If you keep a record of your daily activities, you may identify triggers. If you notice a clear pattern, it is much easier to avoid the same trigger factors in the future. If there is no obvious trigger it will be more difficult to know what to avoid and you will have no warning, so it is essential to have a clear plan for coping whether you identify a trigger or not.

How do I cope with a flare up of my pain?

Make a plan of the things you do that make your pain easier, for example if safe to do so, place a hot water bottle on the site you feel pain, take a warm bath or shower, use heat pads, use a TENS machine, or have a massage. Recognise that you have a flare up, accept what is happening and try not to panic. You can cope. Some people use the following:

Relaxation Therapy

Your muscles tense up and guard against pain when your pain level increases. Learn how to let go and ease the tension by using relaxation techniques. You can listen through apps on a smartphone or CD's, to relaxation music and voices techniques. There are a number of apps that focus on mediation / mindfulness which can be useful.

Distraction Therapy

Imagine a situation where you felt peaceful, in control and happy. When you have a flare up, try using that image to help you remember the feeling and how enjoyable that was for you. Using a TENS machine can also be a useful distraction and remember to accept help from others.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available
- If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111
- Keep the environment clean and tidy
- Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.

Positive Thinking

Try to remain positive. Negative thoughts can make you feel worse and increase your pain sensation. Having positive thoughts can improve your mood.

Temporarily reduce your activities

How much activity and how many tasks can you manage before the pain starts or worsens? What level of activity can you do before you feel you have to stop, or before you start to feel sore? Make an effort to record the amount of time this takes. Use this as a baseline to start with and stick to it on good and bad days. This is known as “pacing” yourself. The rewarding part about using a baseline and pacing yourself is that you are able to manage more of the activity as you practice.

Pace Yourself

Break activities and tasks into small manageable chunks. This will help to keep flare ups at bay. By gradually pacing and building up the amount you do, you will reduce the number of bad days you experience.

Exercise / Mobility

Continue with your daily commitment to exercise and mobility as your baseline allows. Keeping active improves mood, sleep and general well-being by releasing the body's own “feel good” hormones called endorphins.

Do not be tempted to push through the pain, this may lead to a flare up of your pain condition.

Medication

If you are successful with the above techniques, you may not need to increase your pain relief. If you do feel extra medication is needed you should add this into your future plan for coping. Remember this increase in pain relief will only be for the flare up and should be stopped when it is over.

Things to avoid

- Continuing with an activity without thinking – “I’ll just get this finished then I’ll stop” – this is not helpful. You must set yourself a limit and then stop.
- Getting increasingly upset will make things harder to cope with. Accept this flare up in your pain and acknowledge you will get through it.
- Going to bed for the day – this is not the answer.
- Calling a doctor if there is no new problem.

When the flare up is over

- Take some time to think about this flare up.
- How did you deal with it; this will help you learn ways of coping better next time.
- Recognise your achievements – praise yourself for coping so well – what did you like about the way you coped?
- What could you do better next time?
- How well have you been pacing your activities? Could you do better?

We hope you find this leaflet useful. Please let us know if you have any comments.

Additional information

The information in this leaflet is not intended to replace your doctor's advice. If you require more information or have any questions please contact the Chronic Pain Team.

Contact details

If you have any questions please contact the Chronic Pain Management Service on 01902 695122.

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਆਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。