

What is a Flare?

Inflammatory arthritis can be unpredictable. Sometimes your symptoms may worsen without clear reason.

If you have an unexpected increase in symptoms such as:

- Increased pain in your joints
- Increased swelling of your joints
- Increased joint stiffness
- Feeling generally unwell
- Fatigue that can last hours or weeks

then you may be experiencing a 'flare'.

The causes of a flare are mostly unknown. However, increased stress or infections may trigger a flare.

Managing a Flare

Before contacting the advice line, try a few of the self-help treatments below:

Pain-Relief Medication:

Regular non-steroidal anti-inflammatory tablets (NSAIDs) like ibuprofen and painkillers such as paracetamol may help to settle the inflammation and control your pain. Make sure you are not sensitive or allergic to the ingredients.

Never exceed the recommended dose.

Treatment for Joints:

Heat: hot water bottle, heat pad, wheat bag, bath/shower.

Cold: bag of ice cubes or frozen peas, or jelly pack.

Always place a damp towel between your skin and the heat/cold source to prevent burning, skin irritation or damage.

Apply any of these treatments to the affected joint for up to 15 mins at a time.

Anti-inflammatory gels may help if applied to swollen or inflamed joints.

Exercise and Rest

It is not harmful to continue to exercise your joints during a flare, but you should pace yourself.

Do more gentle exercises (such as stretching) in place of your normal regime.

Resume your normal active exercise Regime once the flare has passed.

Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and meditation can help reduce the pain.

What if I Still Have Symptoms?

If the flare continues for more than 5-7 days and hasn't responded to the self-help treatments, please contact us on the **advice line** for further help:

01793 604323



Useful Contact Numbers

Arthritis Research UK
0870 850 5000
www.arthritisresearchuk.org

National Rheumatoid Arthritis
Society (NRAS)
01628 670606
www.nras.org.uk

Arthritis Care
020 7380 6500
www.arthritiscare.org.uk

National Ankylosing Spondylitis
Society
01435 873527
www.nass.co.uk

National Osteoporosis Society
01435 873527
www.nos.org.uk

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If you would like this information
in another format, i.e. large print
or another language, please
contact the Patient Advice and
Liaison Service (PALS)
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01793 604031

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NHS Foundation Trust

Patient Information

Self-Help Guide: Advice on Flares

Rheumatology Department

Telephone Advice Line
Monday – Friday
9am-5pm

01793 604323

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