

# FLARE-UP PLANNING

## ARTHRITIS ACTION FACTSHEETS



Many people who live with persistent pain such as the pain of arthritis will find that from time to time, the pain can get worse. You may have tried a new activity and over-done it a bit, there might have been a change in your routine or there may be no obvious reason. These 'flare-ups' are normal, lasting a few hours or days, and will usually improve by themselves. However, it is important to have a management plan to help you cope and take control if this does happen.

### ***Triggers***

It can be helpful to make a note of what made you feel worse (the trigger). Some common examples include:

- > Inactivity and immobility
- > Doing too much on a good day – poor pacing
- > Dwelling on the feelings of pain
- > Worrying about the meaning of pain
- > Other worries or stress
- > Feeling low
- > Poor sleep

### ***Techniques***

It can also be helpful to record what you have tried to help your symptoms and what has worked for you in the past so that you can be better prepared in the future.

**Relative rest:** Movement is important to the health of every joint in the body, whether you have arthritis or not. When you are having a flare-up, it may be necessary to reduce the activities that are most uncomfortable, but this should be a temporary measure, and you should get back to normal activity as soon as you are able.

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**Painkillers:** These may help to take the edge off your pain allowing you to get back to your usual activities sooner. It is important to take medications as prescribed in order to get the maximum benefit and it can be useful to ask your GP for a medication review occasionally to ensure you have the right medication for you.

**Distraction techniques:** Focusing on other things can positively change the way in which the body deals with pain. Reading a book, watching TV, playing mind games like Sudoku or getting out of the house rather than dwelling on the pain can all help you to manage your symptoms.

**Relaxation techniques:** Similarly, relaxation exercises such as deep breathing , guided imagery or meditation can calm the nerves that report pain and stimulate the release of natural pain killing hormones called endorphins. Mindfulness is a specific type of meditation that has been shown to offer benefit to people living with persistent pain such as arthritis.

**Apply heat or cold packs:** The nerves that conduct pain also conduct temperature sensation. Stimulating these nerves by applying hot or cold packs can help to reduce the amount of pain you feel.

**The pain of arthritis can fluctuate from time to time. As such, it can be useful to develop an action plan to deal with such an eventuality.**

**You can use the table on the next page, to record your flare-up plan, then pin it to the fridge door or keep it somewhere safe so that you can refer to it should you need to!**

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No.	Trigger	Pain management technique	How useful was it? What might I change for next time?
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			