

Patient information

Chronic pain self-management

Managing a flare up of pain

You are probably used to having good days and bad days. It is likely that this will continue. Occasionally you may experience a sudden increase in your pain – either immediately after a triggering event or within the next 24 hours. This is known as a ‘flare up’ or ‘set back’.

What you do at this time will make a difference to:

- How often you have the flare up
- How long the flare up lasts
- How severe the flare up is at the time.

How to manage your flare up

Stop and think:

- What is happening?
- Have you been overdoing something?
- What are your options now?
- Make a plan

What to do next

- **Don't panic!** This is a temporary set-back.
- Stop what you have been doing and take a short break.
- Do something different for a short time – go for a walk, do some stretch exercises.
- Practise your relaxation or distraction strategies.
- Challenge any unhelpful thoughts – you have coped with this before, you can do so again.
- Prioritise your plans for the rest of the day.
- Don't overreact – this will make things worse.

When the pain eases, think about how you coped – what can you learn, could you do better next time, what really worked? Congratulate yourself for coping as well as you did. You may like to think of rewarding yourself for getting through this – treat yourself!

Example of a pain flare up plan

Flare Up Plan	
Initial flare up issues	Personal strategies
Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use heat/ice bag• Use Tens machine• Pain medication• Use the relaxation techniques in this booklet
Reduced movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pacing of activities• Gentle stretches• Mindful of posture• Gentle exercise• Move at least once an hour
Frustration/stress/low mood	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to music• Distraction• Visual imagery• Phone a friend for a chat

You can use the blank pain flare up plan at the end of this document.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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Flare Up Plan

Initial flare up issues	Personal strategies
Pain	
Reduced movement	
Frustration / stress / low mood	