

Rheumatology Advice Line 028 9442 4979 - Information for Patients

Advice for managing an Inflammatory Arthritis flare

What is a flare?

Your Inflammatory Arthritis will often be manageable but sometimes your symptoms may worsen and this is known as a 'flare'. The duration of a flare can be a couple of hours to a couple of days or longer.

What triggers a flare?

It is not always clear why your arthritis has flared however it may be useful to try and notice any triggers, for example physical or mental stress.

Ideas that could help manage a flare:

- Regular pain relief.
- Anti-inflammatory creams and gels may reduce joint swelling and inflammation.
- Hot and cold treatment e.g. a wheat bag or cooled gel pack. It is important to protect your skin when using hot/cold packs. Place a towel between the pack and your skin and only apply these treatments for a maximum of 15 minutes.
- Keep active – continue to keep your joints moving to help prevent stiffness and maintain muscle strength. You may need to take short rests between activities during a flare.



Remember to never exceed the maximum recommended dose. Please discuss with your GP or pharmacist before taking if you are unsure.

Medication queries

How long before my new medication takes effect?

Most disease-modifying medications (DMARDs/Biologic drugs) take 8-12 weeks to be effective, particularly if they require a gradual dose increase. Some people notice an improvement earlier than this.



Should I stop any of my medications before going for surgery or dental extractions?

You will most likely need to temporarily stop your medication for a period of time. Please contact us for further advice. Drugs do not need stopped for crowns, fillings or dental hygiene procedures.



Report any medication side-effects and seek advice from your GP or Rheumatology team.

What can I do about injection site reactions?

- Ensure you inject in the way you have been taught.
- Apply a cold compress to the site.
- Take an anti-histamine tablet, available from your chemist.
- Try changing where you give the injection each time: you can inject into the front of the thigh and the abdomen.
- If you have pain, redness or swelling around the injection site that does not go away, or gets worse, call the Rheumatology Advice Line.



Travelling with medication:

- You need to take your medication, including any injections you need, when you go on holiday. Keep your medication in your hand luggage if you are flying.
- If we supply your medication, please contact the Rheumatology department for a travel letter if you are taking injections with you on a plane.
- Before you go, make sure you have sufficient supplies of your medication and 'sharps' bins for disposal of used syringes.



Contact the company that delivers your medications to reorganise delivery:

- Sciensus – call 0333 103 9499 or email: generalenquiries@sciensus.com
- Lloyds – call 0345 2636135 or email: LPCH.customerserviceglasgow@nhs.net
- If you have ongoing delivery problems, please contact 02894 424000 ext 332116 who will check if your script is up to date.

Vaccination information

Pneumococcal

The pneumococcal vaccine is recommended to protect against pneumococcus (an infection that can cause pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia). Usually a single vaccine given just once will protect for life.

Influenza (Flu)

It is recommended that you receive the flu vaccine annually to protect you from the risk of flu and its complications. If you received a shielding letter your household contacts should receive it too.

Covid -19

If you meet the criteria for the Covid-19 vaccine, you will receive a letter from the Medical Director's Office, Northern Trust For further information visit www.nidirect.gov.uk