

Find out more ...

A separate leaflet is available regarding the Rheumatology telephone advice line at St. Peter's Hospital.

Additional detailed information about rheumatoid arthritis is available on the internet by logging on to:

www.arc.org.uk
www.arthritiscare.org.uk
www.rheumatoid.org.uk

A variety of leaflets on rheumatoid arthritis and related subjects is available in the Rheumatology Department at St. Peter's Hospital.

- please help yourself when you next visit us.

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you remain concerned, PALS can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

Department: Rheumatology SPH

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We can provide interpreters for a variety of languages, information in larger print or other formats (e.g. audio) - please call us on 01932 723553.



To use the text relay service, prefix all numbers with 18001.

اگر نیاز به ترجمہ دارید، لطفاً با شماره 01932 723553 تماس بگیرید.
ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਭਰਜਮੇ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਰਿਵਾਜ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ: 01932 723553
اگر آپ اس کا اردو زبان میں ترجمہ چاہتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم اس فون نمبر 01932 723553 پر رابطہ کریں
Se precisa de uma tradução por favor contacte: 01932 723553
আপনার অনুবাদের দরকার হলে এখানে যোগাযোগ করুন : 01932 723553
यदि आपको अनुवाद की ज़रूरत है तो कृपया इस नंबर पर फोन करें: 01932 723553
Jeżeli chcemy, aby te informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić 01932 723553

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Rheumatoid Arthritis Coping with a Flare

Rheumatology Department

Advice Line number 01932 722703



What is a Flare?

Levels of inflammation in rheumatoid arthritis are unpredictable. There will be times when your arthritis is quiet and relatively untroublesome. At other times a '**flare**' of arthritis will result in the worsening of inflammation, pain and stiffness. A flare may be sudden and can last for hours, days or weeks.

Joint pain may be accompanied by increasing tiredness, feeling generally unwell or feverish and you may even lose your appetite.

Why flares may occur?

Sometimes a flare may follow an infection, such as a chest or urinary infection. As the infection may require treatment it is advisable to consult your GP.

Some vaccinations may also cause a flare, as may a period of undue stress, overwork or traumatic injury. At times there may be no obvious cause for the flare.

What can you do during a flare?

Medication:

During a flare you may need to adjust some of your tablets. Taking your **painkillers and / or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory** tablets regularly or increasing the dose may help to control your pain. **Never exceed the maximum recommended dose.**

Do not alter the dose of your steroid tablets or any other medications prescribed for your arthritis, without first consulting your Rheumatologist or Specialist Nurse.

Treatment for joints:

Heat or cold applied to joints may reduce pain and inflammation

- **Examples of heat:** Hot water bottle, electric heat pad, wheat bag, jelly pack or warm bath / shower.
- **Examples of cold:** Bag of ice cubes or frozen peas, wheat bag or jelly pack.

These treatments may be applied for up to 15 minutes. Always place a towel between the skin and the heat / cold source to prevent burning or skin damage.

Anti-inflammatory gels may be applied to swollen and / or inflamed joints. These should be used sparingly especially if anti-inflammatory tablets are also being taken. Gels may also irritate the skin.

Always read the leaflet which accompanies any medications.

What about rest and exercise?

During a flare it is important to '**pace**' your activities. You will need to plan your day taking into consideration your increased tiredness.

Short rests in between activities may be needed

but it is advisable to keep your joints moving. This will help to prevent stiffness and maintain muscle tone.

You may be reluctant to exercise the joints which are flared, but it may help to move them through their normal range of movement 2 or 3 times a day.

You may find that wearing wrist splints, for short periods or at night, helps to reduce pain by keeping the joint in a natural position. If your daily life allows, a brief period of afternoon rest may help you to manage through the rest of the day.

Other ways of coping

Relaxation, distraction or imagery may be helpful. This may include listening to music or picturing yourself in a pleasant environment.

Aromatherapy may help to improve the feeling of well-being.

What should you do if your flare does not settle?

If your flare does not settle despite trying all these methods and you need further help, you should contact the:

**Rheumatology Advice Line on
01932 722703.**

This line is available for patients currently attending the Rheumatology Department at St. Peter's Hospital.