MANAGING YOUR ARTHRITIS FLARE

Living with inflammatory arthritis can be unpredictable. Even with treatment, there may be times when your symptoms flare.

Use this action plan to discuss and plan the best way to manage flares with your rheumatology team. This action plan is for people with inflammatory arthritis such as rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis (also called axial spondyloarthritis).

About flares

Flares are times when your disease is more active, causing more inflammation. A flare can last from a few days to weeks.

Signs of a flare

- ✓ More severe joint pain, stiffness and/or swelling than usual
- ✓ Difficulty doing the things you need to do, including personal care, work and family life
- ✓ Feeling very tired and finding it hard to sleep at night because of pain
- ✓ Possibly a fever, body aches and/or feeling unwell
- ✓ Usual treatments aren't keeping your symptoms under control
- ✓ Feeling frustrated, upset and withdrawing from people

Causes

Flares can happen at any time, with little or no warning and without an obvious cause. Sometimes flares can be triggered by:

- doing too much, getting run down or pushing yourself beyond your limits
- emotional stress
- infections or illnesses
- missing, skipping or taking the wrong dose of medicines
- changes to your treatment, including switching to a different medicine or reducing the dose of your medicine.

Medicines that can be used for flares include:

- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), eg, ibuprofen, meloxicam
- pain relief medicines, eg, paracetamol
- glucocorticoid (also known as corticosteroid) tablets or injections, eg, prednisolone

Tip: Ask your rheumatology team

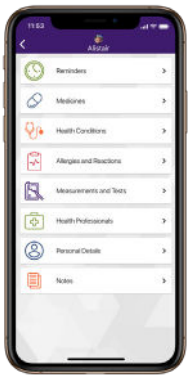
- Are there any medicines I can keep at home in case of a flare?
- How do I urgently get a prescription for any other flares medicines (eg, do I contact my rheumatologist, rheumatology nurse or GP?)

Further information

- **Arthritis Australia** arthritisaustralia.com.au
- **Australian Rheumatology Association** rheumatology.org.au/patients/medication-information.asp
- **NPS MedicineWise** nps.org.au
  - Information about pain and medicines for pain relief nps.org.au/professionals/opioids-chronic-pain#resources
- **Pain Management Network** aci.health.nsw.gov.au/chronic-pain/chronic-pain
- **painHEALTH** painhealth.csse.uwa.edu.au/

Keep track of your medicines and important health information using the MedicineWise app.

Visit NPS MedicineWise at nps.org.au/medicinewiseapp for more information, or download the app on your smartphone today.



Australian Rheumatology Association

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Name: Date: **ACTIONPLAN**

Managing my flares

Share this action plan with your healthcare team to help you understand what you can do during a flare.

Take medicine(s)

Active ingredient: ..... **Dose:** ..... **How often:** ..... **For how long:**	⬡ **I have this medicine at home for when I need it** **OR** ⬡ **I have a prescription for this medicine, to fill at the pharmacy when I need it** **OR** ⬡ **I need to visit my GP for a prescription** **OR** ⬡ **I need to call or visit my rheumatologist for a prescription**	*Notes (eg, expiry date, where medicine is stored)*
Active ingredient: ..... **Dose:** ..... **How often:** ..... **For how long:**	⬡ **I have this medicine at home for when I need it** **OR** ⬡ **I have a prescription for this medicine, to fill at the pharmacy when I need it** **OR** ⬡ **I need to visit my GP for a prescription** **OR** ⬡ **I need to call or visit my rheumatologist for a prescription**	

Things I can do

	Notes		Notes
⬡ **Use heat and cold treatments** Try heat packs, warm baths or showers, ice or cold packs		⬡ **Get extra rest** Make time for sleep and rest	
⬡ **Continue gentle exercise and movement** Keep your joints moving to prevent stiffness		⬡ **Splints, braces, aids, equipment** Take pressure off sore joints	
⬡ **Self-care** Take your mind off pain and bring down your stress levels (eg, have a bath, listen to music, meditate)		⬡ **Get support** Let people around you know how you're feeling and accept help (eg, ask friends for help with school pick-up)	

When to call my rheumatology team (eg, my pain and stiffness are not improving with medicine)

⬡ .....

⬡ .....

+TARGETED THERAPIES ALLIANCE

Helping consumers and health professionals make safe and wise therapeutic decisions about biological disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (bDMARDs) and other specialised medicines. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health through the Value in Prescribing bDMARDs Program Grant.

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