

Flare ups: Do's and Don'ts

Whilst we hope that your patient has benefited from the pain management programme, we advise patients that a pain flare up is a **normal** and **expected** consequence of living with chronic pain. Your patient has had instruction on how to deal with flare-ups and has been asked to create their own personal flare up plan in order to reduce distress and the need for **GP visits**.

If your patient presents with a flare up it would be helpful if you could encourage them to use these principles:

- Identify cause: this may not always be immediately apparent. (Common causes include overactivity, stress, sitting too long, other ill health etc)
- Cut exercise and activity baselines by half
- Rest for short periods only
- Do more "active" relaxation - using tape/CD - spares can be obtained from the pain management programme Tel: 0131 537 9122 or alternatives via online bookshops (see below)
- Check for negative thoughts and "catastrophic" thinking
- Temporary increase in medication if necessary, gradually reduced following flare up
- Reread pain management manual
- Plan to slowly increase activity levels once flare up has settled

Patient Support: We encourage patients to contact voluntary organisations run by chronic pain sufferers (many ex - programme patients). This helps provide a support system from others who understand the difficulties of living with a long-term pain problem as well as access to information on any recent developments in pain management.

Pain Association Scotland: Freephone info: 0800 783 6059 Web: <http://www.chronicpaininfo.org/>

Pain Concern: Tel: 01620 822572 Web: <http://www.painconcern.org.uk/>

Additional websites for information, links to specialist knowledge, online bookshops etc

Back Care: Tel: 020 8977 5474 Web: <http://www.backcare.org.uk/>

Pain Society: <http://www.painsociety.org/>

Pain Support: Web: <http://www.painsupport.co.uk/>

Physiotherapy: You may feel it appropriate to refer your patient for some physiotherapy. If so, please ensure that the **physio referral** includes attendance dates for the pain management programme. Hopefully this will enable the community physios (many of whom now have training in chronic pain) to **reinforce learned pain management strategies** and avoid repeating **unsuccessful** or **unnecessary treatments**. Should they require advice or additional information, they may wish to contact the pain management programme

Emotional Distress: During times of emotional upset, lowering of mood or occurrence of distressing life events, pain often increases and many patients find it hard to maintain their pain management principles. During such times:-

- Encourage pain management principles above
- Consider anti-depressant medication
- Consider referral to local mental health/ counselling services

Unfortunately our service is not able to provide longer-term help with mental health issues however we are very happy to discuss such issues with you by phone to help decide on the best course of action.

We hope that you find this information useful. If you wish to discuss any of the above points, please telephone the pain management programme on 0131 537 9128

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