



Somerset Community Pain
Management Service

**Working together
on my health**

Flare Ups and Set Backs

It is a normal part of living with long term pain to have occasions when the pain flares up or worsens. Sometimes it is because there are particular goals you want to achieve, exceptional circumstances or important life events. Sometimes there is no obvious reason.

People tell us how frightening it can be when they have a “flare up”. This is a time when, perhaps like you, they say:

“Maybe something has been missed”

“I knew there was something wrong”

“I need to get this sorted”

However, most recurring episodes of pain are not caused by serious damage, and will normally improve over time.

You can record your flare ups and pain levels on the ‘My Pain’ tracker in the ‘Take Action’ section of the patient online platform, available for patients registered with the pain service and accessible through the Pain Service website. You can also do this yourself by setting goals on paper (see the section on ‘Goal Setting’).

How to deal with a flare up: What other people have found useful

- ✓ Notice when it happens or what triggers a flare up. Common triggers include over or underactivity, stress, difficulty sleeping or changes in the way you take your medication.
- ✓ Try not to blame yourself or others – be kind to yourself.
- ✓ Take simple pain medication (such as Paracetamol) regularly to keep the pain at a more manageable level. Speak to your pharmacist if you are unsure which tablets to take and read the section **Using Medication to Manage Long Term Pain**, which you can find in the ‘Using Medication’ section of the ‘Get more resources/information’ area of the Pain Website.
- ✓ Avoid periods of prolonged rest. Resting for more than a day or two is not helpful, and can actually prolong the pain and decrease general fitness and muscle tone.
- ✓ Keep active and try to keep doing normal activity, even if you still have pain and have to do some activities differently. Sometimes family members will want to do more for you, so you can take it easy, but this is not helpful in the long term. Try to perform tasks yourself, and only get help if you cannot do it.
- ✓ Stay at work, or return to work as soon as possible. You should not wait until the pain has gone before you go back. You may need to modify some of the activities you do at work or request reduced hours initially. Speak to your employer at the earliest opportunity to discuss this.
- ✓ Positive thinking is important during a flare up. Remind yourself that you can cope and that you have tools for managing.