



Stress can trigger a flare

Symptoms of a flare (may include):

- increase of swelling and / or stiffness in the joints
- worsening pain in the joints
- increased tiredness
- general 'unwell' feeling
- night sweats / fever / weight loss

Flare Self-Management

Rest and exercise

During a flare it is important to 'pace' and prioritize 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 prevent stiffness and maintain muscle tone.

What is an inflammatory flare?

The definition of a 'flare' may differ for each patient based on their symptoms; however, it is generally an unpredictable and worsening episode of their condition.

Whether it's relatively short-lived or so severe you can hardly get out of bed, a flare can be frustrating, bewildering, and painful. Along with an increase in joint pain, swelling, fatigue and stiffness, you may feel increasingly low in mood.

Flares can vary in intensity, duration, and frequency, but they're usually reversible — if treated promptly.

What causes a flare?

For most people, the flare risk increases when treatments are tapered or stopped. Other triggers include overexertion, stress, infection, or poor sleep.



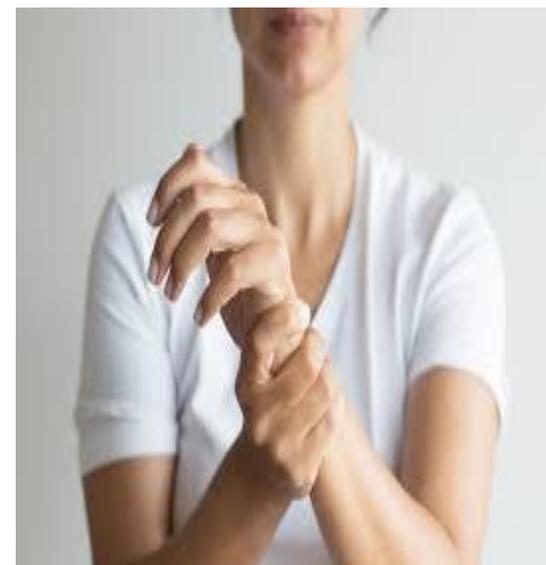
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**Rheumatoid Arthritis
(RA)**

**Flare Self-
management**

**Patient Initiated Follow-Up
(PIFU)**



Heat or cold

- Heat or cold applied to joints may reduce pain and inflammation.
- **Heat:** wheat bag, hot water bottle, heat pad.
- **Cold:** bag of ice cubes or frozen peas, wheat bag or gel pack.

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

Medication

- You may take painkillers and/or anti-inflammatory medication (NSAIDs). NSAIDs must be discussed with your pharmacist or doctor as they may not be safe for everyone. You should continue to take your other usual medications.
- Anti-inflammatory gels may be applied locally to swollen and inflamed joints following the manufacturer's instructions.
- If the above techniques have been tried and your symptoms show no signs of improvement after 7-10 days you may need to contact Rheumatology Team for advice. They may discuss the possible need for a short course of steroids or a depo (steroid) injection.

Sometimes, simple self-management techniques and a few days' rest are enough, and you don't need additional treatment. But if your symptoms are gradually getting worse, you may need to discuss with your rheumatology team.

If you are having regular flares, it may be time to review your rheumatic medication (DMARDs). Your symptoms and blood tests will help the team to assess whether your disease is becoming less controlled or whether you're experiencing more pain for other reasons.



Resources available

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society

<https://nras.org.uk/>

0800 298 7650

enquiries@nras.org.uk

SMILE-RA (Self-Management Individualised Learning Environment)
Launched by NRAS for people with RA who want to learn more about the condition/treatments and self-management techniques.

Rheumabuddy - An app which offers a diary to track RA and JIA symptoms and offers a community with various questions and concerns from other patients.



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