



Chronic Pain
AUSTRALIA



FACT SHEET

CHRONIC PAIN AUSTRALIA

“Having a Pain Flare-Up Plan can help you get through temporary increases in pain.”

Planning for pain flare-ups*

Sometimes chronic pain may temporarily become worse – this is often called a ‘flare-up’. The reason for a flare-up may be pretty clear, such as doing a lot of gardening or increased exercise. Other times the flare-up may come ‘out of the blue’. Although flare-ups are usually time-limited, they can be very distressing and challenging. You may find it helpful to have a written Pain Flare-Up Plan that you can refer to when pain increases.

Things to consider

Just as everyone’s pain is different, flare-up plans are also a personal thing. However some things to consider include:

- Assess your pain – is this a new pain or an increase in your existing pain? If it’s a new pain or you have new symptoms, it might be worth seeing a health professional.
- Identify if you have been overdoing things – prioritise what you need to do, if there are things you can delegate to others, and pace your activities to make them more manageable.
- Assess your stress level – this can increase pain. If so, use techniques such as relaxation, meditation or doing things that you enjoy.

- Don’t stop doing everything. It may be helpful to reduce your activity for a few days, but keep moving and plan to gradually increase to your previous level of activity.
- Remember a flare-up doesn’t necessarily mean more damage. Reflect on previous flare-ups – they have probably settled with time. It can be comforting to tell yourself that you’ve been here before and it will pass.
- Be kind to yourself. It’s probably not helpful to push through the pain to get something done.

Once your flare-up has passed, review your plan – what worked well and what didn’t? Revise your plan for next time.

*Adapted from *The Pain Book* by Siddal et al.

Remember

Increased pain is part of the normal fluctuations that occur with chronic pain. It is usually time-limited.

A written plan for dealing with such flare-ups can be a helpful part of managing your pain.