

# Rheumatology Advice Line - Information for Patients

## Advice for managing an Inflammatory Arthritis flare

### What is a flare?

- Your Inflammatory Arthritis will often be manageable but sometimes your symptoms may worsen and this is known as a 'flare'. The duration of a flare can be a couple of hours to a couple of days or longer.

### What triggers a flare?

- It is not always clear why your arthritis has flared however it may be useful to try and notice any triggers, for example physical or mental stress.

### Ideas that could help manage a flare:

- Regular pain relief
- Anti-inflammatory creams and gels may reduce joint swelling and inflammation.
- Hot and cold treatment e.g. a wheat bag or cooled gel pack. It is important to protect your skin when using hot/cold packs. Place a towel between the pack and your skin and only apply these treatments for a maximum of 15 minutes.
- Keep active - continue to keep your joints moving to help prevent stiffness and maintain muscle strength. You may need to take short rests between activities during a flare.



**Remember to never exceed the maximum recommended dose. Please discuss with your GP or pharmacist before taking if you are unsure.**



## Medication queries

### How long before my new medication takes effect?

- Most disease-modifying medications (DMARDs) take 8-12 weeks to be effective, particularly if they require a gradual dose increase. Some people notice an improvement earlier than this.



### Should I stop any of my medications before going for surgery/ going to the Dentist?

- You should continue to take all prescribed medication unless you are advised to do otherwise.



**Report any medication side-effects and seek advice from your GP or Rheumatology team.**



### What can I do about injection site reactions?

- Ensure you inject in the way you have been taught.
- Apply a cold compress to the site.
- Take an anti-histamine tablet, available from your chemist.
- Try changing where you give the injection each time: you can inject into the front of the thigh and the abdomen.
- If you have pain, redness or swelling around the injection site that does not go away, or gets worse, call the Rheumatology Advice Line.



### Travelling with medication:

- You need to take your medication, including any injections you need, when you go on holiday. Keep your medication in your hand luggage if you are flying.
- If we supply your medication, please contact the Rheumatology department for a travel letter if you are taking injections with you on a plane.
- Before you go, make sure you have sufficient supplies of your medication and 'sharps' bins for disposal of used syringes.



### My medication has not been delivered - what should I do?



- Contact the company that delivers your medications to reorganise delivery
- Healthcare at Home - call 03331039499 or email: [generalenquiries@sciencus.com](mailto:generalenquiries@sciencus.com)
- If you have ongoing delivery problems, please contact Musgrave Pharmacy who will check if your script is up to date and contact the relevant team.

## Vaccination information

### Pneumococcal

The pneumococcal vaccine is recommended to protect against pneumococcus (an infection that can cause pneumonia, meningitis and septicaemia). Usually a single vaccine given just once and will protect for life.

### Influenza (Flu)

It is recommended that you receive the flu vaccine annually to protect you from the risk of flu and its complications. If you received a shielding letter your household contacts should receive it too.

### Covid-19

If you meet the criteria for the Covid-19 vaccine, you will receive a letter from the Rheumatology department. For further information visit [www.pha.site/COVID19](http://www.pha.site/COVID19)



\* If you require immunisation with a live vaccine for example Shingles, BCG or Yellow fever, please contact your Rheumatology team for specialist advice.

