

# Rheumatology Advice Line - Information for Lupus Patients

## Advice for managing a flare

### What is a flare?

A flare is a time when your symptoms get worse and you feel unwell. When you are first diagnosed, flares can seem difficult to manage but as time passes you and your Rheumatology team will learn how to specifically manage your symptoms.

**Lupus Advice Line:**

**028 9615 5613**

### What causes a flare?

They can be caused by a range of triggers, including:

- Stress or Trauma (both mental and Physical)
- Surgery
- Tattoos
- Infections
- Foods -foods are specific to patients and it may take time to establish if a food causes a flare
- Stopping Lupus medication
- Other medications
- Sun exposure
- Overdoing things and not resting

### How to tell if a Lupus flare is coming?

Before a flare, you might get new signs and symptoms, such as:

- Feeling more tired
- Pain
- Rash
- Fever
- Stomach ache
- Severe headache
- Dizziness

**Lupus flares often have warning signs. You can help prevent flares or make them less severe if you can spot the warning signs and get treatment quickly**



### What can I do to self-manage a flare?

- You can try to remove what triggers your flare. For example, if you think a food stuff is a trigger, it may be useful to keep a food diary. If you are unsure as to what is your trigger, then discuss it with your Rheumatology team.

Self-managing your flare is a great way to feel in control of your own disease. You might find these steps helpful:

- Learn how to tell that a flare is coming
- Reduce stress by setting realistic goals for yourself
- Limit time you spend in the sun and in fluorescent and halogen light
- Choose a healthy balanced diet
- Get enough sleep and rest
- Exercise moderately and keep active
- Create a flare plan. Talk to your support network prior to flares and work out who can help with day to day tasks.
- Go easy on yourself, sometimes a flare happens without any obvious reason. You are not at fault and you are not alone.

**If you find that one of your joints is hot and swollen, experience a significant rash, difficulty breathing, difficulty passing urine or persistent high temperatures please seek more urgent advice**



**If after two weeks you are still struggling with your flare, please contact the Lupus advice line**



## Symptoms information

### Sjögrens

You can read more information about Sjögrens and what you can do to manage your symptoms by clicking this link:

<https://bisom.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/02/Sjogrens-Syndrome-PIL-October-2019.pdf>

### Fatigue

- Described as overwhelming tiredness that isn't improved by sleep.
- It is not an obvious Lupus symptom and can be difficult to manage and explain to family/friends.
- For more information on fatigue, click <https://www.versusarthritis.org/fatigue>

For help with improving sleep, visit:  
[www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene](http://www.sleepfoundation.org/sleep-hygiene)

Activities such as Yoga, Mindfulness, talking therapies and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) may be useful.



## Recommended charities

If you feel like you need to talk to someone regarding your Lupus, to discuss work, benefits or support available, you can contact **Lupus UK**, who have a network of trained volunteers. Visit:

[www](http://www.lupusuk.org.uk)

<https://www.lupusuk.org.uk/need-to-talk/>

## 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.

