

Managing a rheumatoid arthritis (RA) flare

Department of Rheumatology
Information for Patients

Produced: July 2026
Review: July 2029
Leaflet number: 1758 Version: 1

What is a rheumatoid arthritis (RA) flare?

A RA flare causes a worsening of symptoms such as increased:

A flare can last from a few hours to several weeks. It can be triggered by mental or physical stress. For example, infections or heavy physical activity.

It is important to recognise symptoms of a flare early so it can be treated quickly.

How can I manage a flare?

Rest:

- Do relaxation exercises like deep breathing and mindfulness.
- Sleep 7 to 9 hours a night. Avoid late night caffeine.
- Do not push yourself. Pace yourself and avoid activities that increase pain.

Medicines:

- Keep taking your regular RA medicines unless advised not to by your doctor.
- Take regular paracetamol and ibuprofen. Unless your doctor has advised you cannot take these. **Do not** take more than the recommended dose.
- If your doctor has given you steroids to take for a flare then use them as instructed.
- Stay hydrated. **Do not** take RA flare medicine on an empty stomach.

Adjusting:

- Do not be afraid to ask for support from family and work.
- Use splints or aids if you find these help.

Gentle exercises:

- Keep your joints moving to maintain your strength and full range of motion. **Do not** force painful joints.

What should I do if my symptoms do not get better?

If your symptoms have not gotten better after this or they last longer than 7 days then contact our Rheumatology Specialist Nurse helpline:

Call **0116 258 5264**, Monday to Friday between 8am and 4pm.

If you need help outside of these hours, or get any of the following red flag symptoms, please get medical help right away:

- A single red and swollen joint with fever,
- A high fever, unintended weight loss or drenching night sweats,
- Chest pain or shortness of breath,
- New muscle weakness or numbness,

You can get medical help by contacting your GP, the NHS helpline on **111**, or attending your local Emergency Department.

If you are having flares again and again, you may need an increase or change to your current RA treatment plan. You can talk about this in your next clinic appointment.

Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.

To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸے دوسرے ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead

or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net

We are a research hospital and you may be asked to take part in research