

Chronic Pain

Flare-ups

A 'flare-up' is the worsening of your pain, without new symptoms.

Flare-ups can be managed better when:

- ✓ You have a flare-up plan.
- ✓ You are using self-management techniques.
- ✓ You have a doctor that knows you and your history.

It is hard to see a doctor you don't know, especially when you are feeling poorly or are in pain. Since pain is always a complex problem, it is equally hard for a doctor to help you when they don't know you or have your history.

How to make a flare-up plan:

A 'flare-up' plan is a set of instructions to follow when your usual pain worsens. Make your flare-up plan with your doctor during regular office visits. Write it down so you can refer to it when needed.

Your plan can include:

- Reminders of self-management techniques that work for you in times of flare-ups such as relaxation techniques, distraction with a funny video or music, mindfulness, stretching, yoga, or exercise.
- A reminder to contact your doctor or pain specialist for an emergency office visit or phone call.
- Medications to take, along with when and how to take them. For example, what medication to take for 'breakthrough pain' (sudden spikes of pain not relieved with usual pain relievers).



Emergency Services

When you have a flare-up

Before you go to the Emergency Department:

- Use your flare-up plan, if you have one.
- Try to calm your nervous system by using self-management techniques (see Self-Management Resources).
- Try to contact your doctor (or pain specialist). Many doctors keep 'day of' and 'emergency' slots in their daily office schedule for these situations.
- If you need a medication refill and you can't get in to see your doctor, call your pharmacy. Depending on how your doctor wrote your prescription, the pharmacist might be able to do an emergency refill for a few days until you can see your doctor or specialist.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- You have new pain or other symptoms that concern you.
- You have the symptoms your doctor has told you need an Emergency Department visit.
- You have not been able to solve the problem by using your flare-up plan or by calling your doctor or pharmacist and the problem cannot wait until you can see your doctor.

Any time you go to the Emergency Department, bring your medication bottles, your flare-up plan, and the names of your doctors.

My Flare Up Plan

