**Prescribing Tip For Information**

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Managing Flare-Ups in Chronic Non-Cancer Pain

**A flare‑up is a sudden, temporary worsening of symptoms. Usually this refers to more intense pain on a day‑to‑day basis. It can also refer to a change in fatigue, stiffness, function or disease activity. Flare‑ups can be unpredictable and the time they last can vary.1**

[Scenario: Management | Management | Chronic pain | CKS | NICE](https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/chronic-pain/management/management/)2 states:

* Offer a reassessment if a person presents with a change in symptoms such as a flare-up of chronic pain.
* Be aware that a cause for the flare-up may not be identified.
* If a person has a flare-up of chronic pain:
* Review the care and support plan;
* Consider investigating and managing any new symptoms;
* Discuss what might have contributed to the flare-up.

Our local Moving Well service advise:

* Flare ups are normal and can happen from time to time sometimes due to stress, boom and bust pattern etc. It is important not to assume it is a flare up of the usual pain. There can sometimes be acute causes which need assessment and investigation in primary care.
* Once it has been established it is a flare up of longstanding pain, caution is advised around escalating opioids, regardless of the patient’s current dose. See [Opioids Aware | Faculty of Pain Medicine (fpm.ac.uk)](https://fpm.ac.uk/opioids-aware) for further information.
* Depending on the type of pain, consider non-opioid pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatment options if these have not already been tried by the patient.
* Advice and Guidance (A&G) on the best course of action is available from the pain clinic if clinicians need further support in a timely manner.
* If greater support is needed, a referral to pain team including any relevant results in a summary can be made.

Resources for Patients:

The following resources contain information for patients which suggest ways of managing pain other than increasing the use of painkillers.

[Live Well With Pain: How To Manage Setbacks, For People Who Live With Persistent Pain](https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Managing-setbacks-online-v02.pdf)

[Pain Management Guidebook](https://thehonestphysiocom.files.wordpress.com/2020/07/pain-management-guide-book-v1.02.pdf)

**References**

1. [Recommendations | Chronic pain (primary and secondary) in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain | Guidance | NICE](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng193/chapter/recommendations#flare-up) accessed 19/3/24
2. [Scenario: Management | Management | Chronic pain | CKS | NICE](https://cks.nice.org.uk/topics/chronic-pain/management/management/) accessed 19/3/24