

Pain Management – Flare up Control

Purpose: Pain management techniques are aimed at reducing daily pain and inflammation and/or expedite recovery from a flare up or exacerbation.

Instructions:

1. If you are flared up, try not to panic, and practice pain management techniques as described below.
2. If flare-up pain is not improving over the course of a few days, consult your therapist or MD.
3. Practice Therapeutic Breathing Techniques (see additional handout).

Control Inflammation

The inflammatory response is the body's universal response to injury. After an injury, blood vessel pores will dilate and allow fluid (inflammation) to spill around the injured area. This inflammation, or swelling, has the ability to attack disease and clean up damaged tissue and create scar tissue. Although it has its good purpose, a prolonged inflammatory response can lead into a chronic pain cycle. Inflammation, therefore must be controlled.

- ✓ Avoid using heat. Heat increases inflammation by dilating blood vessel pores.
- ✓ Ice Pack the area for 15-20 minutes, up to once an hour. (4-5 times a day when flared-up), and make sure to ice morning and evening before bed.
- ✓ Anti-inflammatory medicine can be helpful if allowed by your MD

ICING DIRECTIONS

To avoid skin irritation and achieve maximal benefit from ice treatments, ice properly.

1. Apply the cold pack to the affected area using a towel layer over the skin.
2. Icing will create four progressive sensations: COLD — BURNING — TINGLING — NUMBING
3. Once reaching the numbing stage you will want to continue icing no more than 10 additional minutes. Use ice approximately **15-20 minutes per session**. You can apply several times per day, but leave the ice off at least twice as long as you had it on before using it again.

Maintain Range of Motion

During your recovery period it is important to maintain your mobility. Do not stay in bed if you can tolerate the upright position. Modify your activity so that you don't increase your pain levels.

- ✓ Try and go through your normal daily activities as tolerated using good body mechanics
- ✓ Do your stretching exercises gently (without increasing pain) 2-3 times per day, followed by icing.
- ✓ If you are unable to do your stretching exercises without increasing pain, then do the following:
 - For **LOW BACK PAIN**: do 5 repetitions of a pelvic tilt. Hold for 1-2 seconds. Make the tilt small enough that it does not increase pain.
 - For **NECK PAIN**: do 5 slow repetitions of neck rotation while lying down. Avoid pain at the end range.
- ✓ Progress back into your stretching routine as tolerated
- ✓ Avoid strength training and heavy activity until the flare-up is resolved. You may need to decrease the repetitions and/or weight when strengthening is resumed.
- ✓ A flare-up should be under control within three days. You might not feel 100%, but on the mend.

Use Proper & Protective Body Mechanics

- ✓ Bend at the hips, not at the spine; keep your spine in a balanced position.
- ✓ Maintain Deep Layer Core (DLC) muscle contraction during movements.
- ✓ Use pillows to support your neck, back and/or legs while sitting or lying down.
- ✓ Lean onto your arms for support while bending your hips if the pain is in your low back.
- ✓ Allow extra time, but try and do your daily needs. Wear slip on shoes, dress lying down on your back, and wear a back brace very temporarily if needed.