

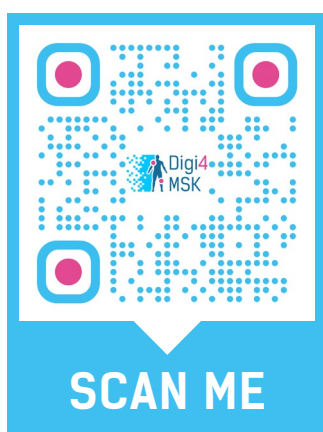
19. How should pain flare-ups be managed?

Claudia, 50, had been doing well with her back pain for several months. She had learned to stay active, sleep better, and pace her workdays. But one morning, after cleaning the house and carrying laundry up the stairs, the pain suddenly flared again—sharp and familiar.

Her first reaction was panic. *“Not again”* she whispered. She cancelled her plans for the weekend, afraid that any movement might make things worse. The disappointment hit hard; she had believed the pain was finally under control. Lying on the sofa, she replayed the last few days in her head, searching for what she had done wrong.

By the next afternoon, the pain had eased a little, though the fear lingered. Each time she felt a twinge, she froze, listening to her body like it was an unpredictable alarm. *“If this happens every time I’m active”*, she thought, *“how will I ever get back to normal?”*

Claudia felt trapped between two instincts: to rest completely until the pain disappeared, or to ignore it and push through. Neither felt right. What she really wanted was to understand how to react—to know what kind of activity was safe and what might actually help her recover faster.



Skills you can build by watching the video:

- Learning how to apply practical steps when pain suddenly worsens.
- Understanding the difference between protective rest and complete inactivity.
- Recognizing that flare-ups are common and manageable parts of long-term recovery.
- Building confidence to adjust activity levels safely instead of stopping everything during a setback.

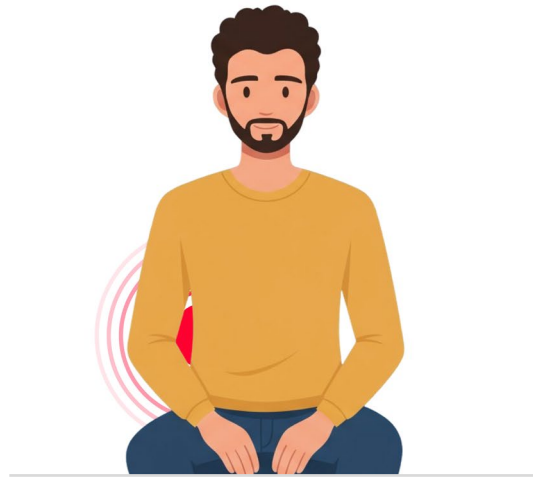
YouTube link: <https://youtu.be/t4cjhYznE3s>

19.1. What to do during a pain flare-up?

The key during a flare-up is to **adjust your activities, not stop them completely**. Your goal is not to get rid of all pain right away, but to stay active in a way that does not further aggravate your pain. This will show your brain that it is okay to move your body.

Take into account the following aspects:

1. **Your body is stronger than you think:** Even if it hurts a bit, moving usually does not mean you are causing harm or damage. Pain is just a signal, and sometimes it can be a bit overprotective. Listen to your body, but remember that movement is often good for you, even if you do experience some pain while staying active.
2. **Keep moving, but slower:** Imagine your pain is a “speed bump,” not a brick wall. You do not have to stop completely; you just need to slow down and go over it carefully. Remember:
 - **Pace yourself:** This is a super important skill. Break down bigger tasks (like housework, walking, or even getting dressed) into smaller chunks. Do a little, rest a bit, then do a little more. For example, if you usually walk for 20 minutes, during a flare-up you might try taking two shorter 5-minute walks with a rest in between.
 - **Also, reduce the “dose”:** If you usually lift 10 kilos, try 5. If you walk 2 kilometres, try 1. It is about doing some activity, not all activity.
3. **Stay active in your daily life:** It is not just about formal exercise. Everyday tasks count too. Can you do the dishes while sitting? Can you stand and stretch while watching TV? Keeping up with these little movements helps your body stay active and prevents stiffness and weakness.
4. **Feel more in control:** By learning to adjust your activities, you will feel more confident and less helpless during pain flare-ups. You will know you have tools to manage it, which can make you less worried and improve your mood. This builds your resilience over time.



Takeaway messages:

During a pain flare-up, the best thing you can do is **adjust, not stop**. Use your usual pain medication as prescribed. Keep moving in a comfortable way, break tasks into smaller parts, and focus on what you can do. Additionally, you can reflect on the triggers of such pain flareups. This smart approach will help you maintain your strength, reduce fear, and get back to your regular activities sooner.