What to Do During a Lupus Flare

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Living With Lupus Flares: What to Binge-Watch During a Lupus Flare

During a flare, your bed starts to feel less like a place of healing, and more like a claustrophobic prison.

As the hour's pass, you convince yourself that the world is going on without you, that everyone is having exciting adventures while you are stuck inside with barely enough energy to do anything at all.

The truth is, whether you have lupus or not, we all go through times in our lives when we must confine ourselves to our bedrooms for a much-needed rest. The difference is that people with lupus will experience longer and recurrent periods of bed rest, which may cause additional stress that could lengthen a flare. If you have lupus, then you'll know that living with lupus flares can often be a struggle. But, there are solutions; distracting yourself in a positive way can help you manage flares!

When your brain is foggy, and your joints are too inflamed to lift a book, binge watching a TV show is an easy and convenient way to get through a flare.

However, it’s important to take the time to choose a show that will have the least likelihood of triggering negative emotions or stress.

To Watch or Not to Watch

When I choose a show to binge watch during a flare or when I am on an emotional low, I first decide what I don’t want to watch anything that includes gratuitous violence, medical drama, or shows which are dark and depressing.

I know from personal experience that watching those things affect me negatively at the best of times, so why would I subject myself to it when I am feeling isolated and ill?

Next time you watch a show, pay attention to how it affects your mood or even your sleep. Make a mental note of whether it affects you differently when you are in a flare versus when you are feeling well.

4 Binge-Worthy Categories

I’ve created four "binge-worthy" categories that I stick to during a flare. By using the categories as a guide, I’ve been able to keep my binge watching in a positive place.

1. Laughter is the Best Medicine

Keeping things light and funny is a great way to beat cabin fever. Sitcom-style comedies like *Friends*, *The Mindy Project*, and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* are great examples of tv shows that allow you to find the humor in the

ups and downs of likable characters.

Reconnecting to the joy of laughter while you are sick can be difficult. Loved ones try to "cheer" us up, but sometimes, no matter how well-intentioned, their efforts do the opposite.

Ask a loved one to come over with snacks and watch with you. There’s no pressure on your loved one to "say the right thing", you get to enjoy each other’s company, and the show provides all the healing laughter.

2. Escape to Another World

Sometimes it’s not enough to get lost in someone else’s story - we also need to escape into an entirely different world.

Shows like *Star Trek*, *Once Upon a Time*, *Game of Thrones*, the *Lord of the Rings Trilogy*, and the *Harry Potter* series transport us to fantastical places where anything is possible.

These TV shows and movies ignite the imagination and feature inspirational characters who overcome significant obstacles. You can travel light years into the future, go on epic adventures, and you may even feel motivated to examine the challenges in your own life.

3. The Brits Do it Best

For the times that you wish to be drawn into superbly acted, well-written drama, the British have it down pat. Shows like *Downton Abbey*, *Sherlock*, and *The Crown* will provide a high-quality distraction from your lupus flare woes.

4. Take a Documentary Dose

Lastly, there are times when you need to ground yourself in reality when you want to learn about real people and the world around you. A great example is the nature documentary series, *Planet Earth*.

Despite being over ten years old, *Planet Earth* is an amazing visual spectacle. There is a sense of calm and comfort that comes from watching the cycle of life, the intelligence of nature, and the beauty of our planet.

Try to stick to documentaries about nature, history, food, and public figures or famous people. Leave the harder hitting social issue documentaries when you are in a healthier state of mind and body.

Binge Tips

Binge watching can get out of hand if you aren’t careful. Keep these tips in mind, so that you don’t lose yourself down the binge-watching rabbit hole:

- Instead of immediately playing the next episode, press pause and do some body stretches in bed before you continue watching. If you are able, step out for some fresh air.
- Make sure you have water by your bed to ensure that you keep yourself hydrated. It is easy to get drawn into a series and only realize later that you haven’t had anything to eat or drink for several hours.
- Create a structured, binge-watching ritual for yourself. Surround yourself with luxurious pillows, have your favorite snack, and give yourself an allotted time to watch.
- If you are watching in the evening, give yourself a cut off time or set the alarm. When you are going through a flare, it’s important that your sleep schedule is not affected.
- Watch with your partner, family or invite someone over to watch with you if you are feeling up to it. If you are watching with someone, you are less likely to overdo it.

Living with lupus flares isn't easy, but a little bit of positive self-care can go a long way.