

# Patient Advice Line

01902 695491 – Option 2

Rheumatology

## What is the rheumatology advice line?

The aim of the rheumatology advice line is to provide advice and support for rheumatology patients who attend The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust for their rheumatology care.

## Who can use the service?

The rheumatology advice line can be utilised by patients who attend the rheumatology clinics. It can also be used by your family or carer. However we will only discuss confidential matters with your family or carer if the patient is present at the time of the clinic appointment.

The advice line should NOT be used for the following:

- Changing rheumatology outpatient's appointments. Please telephone **01902 694138** or **01902 694139**
- Changing rheumatology day unit appointments. Please telephone for **New Cross Day Unit 01902 695498** or **Cannock Day Unit 01543 576013**
- Contacting other departments or if you wish to speak to the Consultants secretary. Please telephone the hospital main switchboard for New Cross Hospital **01902 307999** or Cannock Chase Hospital **01543 572757** and then ask for the department you require or the name of one consultant's secretary you wish to speak to

## When should you use this service?

It is for you to use if you are worried about any of the following:

- If you have a 'flare-up' of your symptoms **in excess of 5 days** which have not responded to your usual self-help treatments and you feel that you need further advice
- If you are experiencing side effects that you think may be caused by the medication prescribed for your rheumatology diagnosis
- If you experience an adverse reaction to a treatment given at the rheumatology clinic or day unit
- If you have been asked by one of the rheumatology team to report on your progress
- If you have any urgent worries or concerns that cannot wait until your next appointment related to your rheumatology condition
- To discuss abnormal blood test results related to rheumatology and request blood forms

**This is NOT an Emergency Service.**

**The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.**

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

## How does it work?

Available Monday to Friday except Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays. Please call 01902 695491 option 2

Please provide your full name, date of birth, a contact telephone number you can be reached on and your hospital number (detailed on your appointment letter).

You will need to provide a brief reason why you are contacting the advice line to the call handlers. You will be allocated an appointment time for a return call from the clinical nurse specialist team or signposted to the appropriate service. We aim to offer you an appointment within 48 hours. Please note this service is not available at weekends and bank holidays.

It is important that you remember this is NOT an emergency service. If you have an emergency situation you will need to directly contact the emergency services in such circumstances. For other urgent problems you should contact your GP or go to your nearest accident and emergency department / walk in centre.

## What is a flare?

It is known that the level of inflammation varies in inflammatory arthritis. There will be times when the arthritis will be relatively quiet and manageable. Other times a 'flare' of arthritis will result in:

- An increase of inflammation, which means more swelling heat and redness at the joint site
- Worsening pain
- More joint stiffness

A flare is unpredictable and may start suddenly. It can last for hours, days and even months if not treated. Joint pain may be accompanied by increasing tiredness; feeling generally unwell or feverish and you may even lose your appetite.

Sometimes a flare may follow an infection, such as a chest or urinary infection. In this case it is advisable to consult your GP as you may require treatment for the infection. Some vaccinations may also cause a flare as may a period of undue stress, overwork or traumatic injury.

## What can you do during a flare?

During a flare you may need to adjust some of your tablets. Taking your painkillers and/or anti-inflammatory tablets regularly should help to control the pain. Never exceed the maximum recommended dose. You should continue to take your other usual medications. If you are taking steroid tablets it is important that you do not alter the dose without consulting a member of the rheumatology team. Anti-inflammatory gels may be applied locally to swollen and inflamed joints.

Local treatment may be applied in the form of heat and cold which may soothe painful joints. Where possible protect the skin with a towel before applying heat or cold to prevent burning or skin damage.

### **Examples of heat:**

Wheat bag, hot water bottle, electric heat pad, jelly pack or a warm bath / shower.

### **Examples of cold:**

Wheat-bag, bag of frozen peas, bag of ice cubes, Jelly pack or a bowl of water with ice cubes (for hands and feet).

Heat and cold treatments may be applied for up to 15 minutes at a time (with the exception of the use of ice cubes in a bowl of water, where 5 minutes would be adequate).

## What about rest and exercise?

During a flare it is important to 'pace' your activities. This means planning your day, taking into consideration your increased tiredness. You may need to take short rests between activities but it is advisable to keep your joints moving. This will help to prevent stiffness and maintain muscle tone. You may be reluctant to exercise those joints involved, but it will help to move them through their normal range of movement 2 or 3 times in a day. Wearing splints may help to reduce pain by keeping the joint in a neutral position. Try to avoid putting pressure through an inflamed joint.

## Other ways in which you can cope

Relaxation, distraction or imagery may be helpful. This may include listening to music or picturing yourself in a pleasant environment. Aromatherapy may help to improve the feeling of well-being.

In order to maintain your safety and disease management which includes your Rheumatology treatment you will be required to have your bloods taken regularly. This will be discussed at your Rheumatology appointment.

Remember any signs of infection stop your Rheumatology medication complete the course of antibiotics before resuming your medication.

## When should I call the advice line regarding a flare?

Sometimes, despite all these methods your flare may not settle. If your flare has not settled after 5 days you should call the rheumatology telephone advice line and leave a message with the call handler:

## Where can I find more information?

Further information on arthritis can be found on the website [www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org) or phone direct on 0800 5200 520.

## Patient Support Organisations and Charities:-

### **National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society**

- ✓ Helpline 0800 2987650
- ✓ Website [www.nras.org.uk](http://www.nras.org.uk)
- ✓ Email [helpline@nras.org.uk](mailto:helpline@nras.org.uk)

### **Lupus UK**

- ✓ Telephone number 01708 731251
- ✓ Website [www.lupusuk.org.uk](http://www.lupusuk.org.uk)

### **Fibromyalgia UK**

- ✓ Helpline 0300 9993333
- ✓ Website [www.fmauk.org](http://www.fmauk.org)
- ✓ Email [charity@fmauk.org](mailto:charity@fmauk.org)

### **Psoriatic Arthritis**

- ✓ Telephone number 01923 672837
- ✓ Website [www.papaa.org](http://www.papaa.org)
- ✓ Email [info@papaa.org](mailto:info@papaa.org)

### **Ankylosing Spondylitis**

- ✓ Helpline 020 87411515
- ✓ Website [www.nass.co.uk](http://www.nass.co.uk)

You can provide us with feedback through the Trusts Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) in any of the following ways:

Website: [www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk](http://www.royalwolverhampton.nhs.uk)

Telephone between 08:30 – 16:30pm for PALS on 01902 695362 or 01902 695368, or for Formal Complaints on 01902 695332

An answer machine is available outside office hours, or text a message to 07880601085.

Email: PALS at [rwh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rwh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or Formal complaints at [rwh-tr.complaints@nhs.net](mailto:rwh-tr.complaints@nhs.net)

Write to PALS at: PALS, Patient Information Centre, Zone C, Location C2, The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust, New Cross Hospital, Wolverhampton, WV10 0QP

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

## Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

## Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

## Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

## Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

## Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。