

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Contents

	Page
The Rheumatology team	2
Where is the Rheumatology department?	3
Services we provide	4
Blood testing	4
Rheumatology day case unit	5
Pharmacy	5
Physiotherapy	6
Occupational therapy	7
Orthotics/surgical appliances	7
Information leaflets	8
Rheumatology advice line	9
Tips on managing a joint flare	10
Travel and vaccination advice	11
Rheumatoid arthritis research	12
Patient-user group	12
Help with prescriptions and health costs	12
Benefits advice	13
Useful contacts	14

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department. This booklet has been designed to provide you with some information about the services that are available to you and to introduce you to the members of the rheumatology team who will be looking after you.

The Rheumatology Team

The Rheumatology team is made up of staff from many different specialties. People involved in your care include:

- Consultant
- Registrars
- Junior doctors
- Clinical Nurse Specialists
- Staff nurses
- Clinical Staff
- Research Staff
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational Therapists
- Orthotists
- Pharmacists
- Phlebotomists
- Administration Staff
- Medical Secretaries
- Clinical Receptionists/Clerks

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

City Hospital Consultants

Dr Deva Situnayake

Secretary: 0121 507 4739

Dr David Carruthers

Secretary: 0121 507 4853

Professor Caroline Gordon

Secretary: 0121 507 5793

Professor Chris Buckley

Secretary: 0121 507 5793

Dr Karim Raza

Secretary: 0121 507 5793

Dr Srinivasa-Rao Elamanchi

Secretary: 0121 507 5872

Sandwell Hospital Consultants

Dr Karl Grindulis

Secretary: 0121 507 3125

Dr Fazal Khattak

Secretary: 0121 507 3470

After your initial visit to see the consultant, depending on the treatment advised, you may be given an appointment to be seen in one of the rheumatology nurse specialist clinics and to attend on a regular basis for blood tests. This allows your disease and treatment to be closely monitored and education about your disease and drugs to be given.

Where is the Rheumatology Department?

City Hospital

Rheumatology outpatients and the rheumatology day case unit are located on the second floor of the Maternity block.

Sandwell Hospital

Outpatient clinics are held in the main outpatient department and day case treatments are carried out in the Women's Health block.

If you need to change a rheumatology outpatient appointment please call:

City Hospital appointments

0121 507 6122

Sandwell Hospital appointments

0121 507 3928

Appointments can also be changed and cancelled online at:

www.swbh.nhs.uk/patients-and-public/change-an-appointment

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Services we provide

Blood testing

As part of your care you may be asked to attend quite frequently for blood tests so that we can monitor your disease and treatment closely. As well as having tests done when you come to appointments with the doctor or nurse you may have to attend at other times just for blood tests.

After visiting the doctor or nurse you will be given a summary of all your blood tests and any other tests e.g. x-rays. It is important that you keep this sheet and attend for your blood tests on the day of the week they are required.

The rheumatology department at City Hospital has its own blood taking service in the rheumatology outpatient area. At Sandwell Hospital blood tests are carried out in the phlebotomy (blood test) department on the ground floor.

Some GP's will perform blood tests and if your GP is one of these, we will provide you with a monitoring booklet. The results of the blood tests should be entered in this booklet so that it can be brought with you to each hospital appointment for the consultant or nurse to review.

If your blood tests are missed regularly, we may have to discontinue your treatment until these tests are performed due to the risk of undetected side effects. If you do have to miss a blood test please contact the department on the advice line number on page 13 so we can arrange an alternative time.

Blood testing service opening times

City Hospital Rheumatology outpatients

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 9.30am – 12pm and 2pm – 4pm

Wednesday and Friday: 9.30am – 12pm

Sandwell Hospital phlebotomy

Monday – Friday: 9.30am – 12pm and 2pm – 4pm

To speak to a member of the team about your blood test form call:

City Hospital

0121 507 5331

Sandwell Hospital

0121 507 3983

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Rheumatology day case unit

Some of the treatments given to Rheumatology patients are given as intravenous infusions (drips). If you are having an intravenous infusion treatment this will be done on the day case unit. Most day case appointments are in the morning but you may need to stay several hours for treatment. When you arrive you will be given an ID wristband to wear so the staff can clearly identify you.

Comfortable armchairs and drinks are available for you on the day case unit but please bring a packed lunch if you know your treatment is going to take a long time. You will also need to bring an up-to-date list of your medications.

If you need to change an appointment please contact the day case unit as soon as possible.

City Hospital Day Case Unit

0121 507 4808

Sandwell Hospital Day Case Unit

0121 507 2537

Pharmacy

The pharmacy department is there to help you with your medicines. Pharmacists dispense your prescriptions and also want you to get the best from your medicines. They can advise you on how to take your medicines and about the effects they may have. Please ask to speak to a pharmacist if you have any queries about your medicines.

Your medicines containers

If you would prefer your medicines in containers that are easy to open then please ask when you hand in your prescription. If you have problems with child resistant locks on bottles or in opening blister packs of tablets then we can usually put your tablets in ordinary brown bottles.

City Hospital Pharmacy

0121 507 5263

Monday - Friday, 9am – 5pm

Sandwell Hospital Pharmacy

0121 507 3783

Monday – Friday, 9am -5pm

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Physiotherapy

You may be referred to the physiotherapy service for advice and exercises to help you manage your pain, improve joint movements, strengthen muscles, improve posture, and manage your daily activities.

If you are referred for physiotherapy you be sent a letter asking you to book an appointment. At the appointment a physiotherapist will ask you questions about your condition and medical history and perform a physical examination assess you which will involve which may require you to undress to your underwear. If the problem is your legs, you may feel more comfortable in shorts. The Physiotherapist will also assess your need for any walking aids.

Once the assessment has been completed, a treatment plan will be drawn up and you will be given exercises to continue at home. You will be advised if you need a further appointment. If you require any walking aids these will be delivered to your home.

City Hospital Physiotherapy

Location: On the first floor of the main hospital

Telephone: 0121 507 4482

Opening times: Monday - Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm
(closed 1pm – 1.30pm)

Sandwell Hospital Physiotherapy

Location: Outpatient physiotherapy is available at 5 sites
– Sandwell Hospital, Rowley Regis Hospital, Neptune Health Centre,
Victoria Health Centre and Glebefields Health Centre.

Telephone: 0121 507 2664

If you are unable to attend your appointment, please let the physiotherapy department know as soon as possible. If you have forgotten to attend your appointment, you will only be given another appointment if you contact physiotherapy within 24 hours otherwise your doctor will have to refer you again.

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Occupational therapy

You will be referred to the occupational therapy service for assessment to see if any adaptations can be made to your environment and lifestyle in order to help you maintain your independence.

Occupational therapists can help you to adapt your movement patterns of the affected joints to reduce strain, provide assistive devices and splints and teach you rest regimes, energy conservation techniques and exercises. If your house needs adapting, the team will liaise with the housing department of your local council or social service about this.

The occupational therapy team will see you in the hospital or at home.

Orthotics/surgical appliances

Your consultant or specialist nurse may refer you to the orthotics department. The orthotics/surgical appliances department provides external devices such as splints to correct and protect parts of the body. For example:

- Hand splints are designed to support the wrist, correct finger deformities and reduce pain.
- Insoles are designed to improve the function of the foot, reduce pain and improve the function of the knee, hip and lower back.
- Extra depth or width footwear or slippers can help those with foot and toe deformities.

City Hospital Orthotics

Location: Fracture Clinic, ground floor of main hospital

Telephone: 0121 507 4358

Opening times: Monday - Friday, 8.30am - 12.30pm and 1pm - 3.30pm

Sandwell Hospital Orthotics

Location: Physiotherapy corridor, outpatient department

Telephone: 0121 507 2784

Opening times: Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 4.30pm

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Information leaflets

The rheumatology department has many information leaflets and books from arthritis charities and specialist groups available in clinic for you to take away. The leaflets cover all aspects of your disease, including its impact on your work and activities.

Leaflets available:

- Introducing Arthritis
- Arthritis can be treated
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Psoriatic Arthritis
- Pain and Arthritis
- Exercise and Arthritis
- Blood Tests and Arthritis
- Diet and Arthritis
- Driving with Arthritis
- Looking after your joints when you have Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Pregnancy and Arthritis
- Physiotherapy and Arthritis
- Hydrotherapy and Arthritis
- Hand and Wrist Surgery for Arthritis
- Gardening with Arthritis
- Joint injections
- Non-steroidals
- Drugs to treat Arthritis
- Biologics

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Rheumatology advice line

The rheumatology advice line is a telephone service which provides advice and support for rheumatology patients. Your relatives may also call with your permission, but confidential issues will only be discussed with you. Your own doctor and other health care professionals can also access the advice line.

You should call the advice line if you:

- Experience a reaction to an injection given at the rheumatology clinic.
- Have a 'flare up' of your condition that has not improved with your usual self-help treatments.
- Are experiencing side effects which you feel may be caused by the medication prescribed for your arthritis.
- Have concerns about your symptoms or management that need to be addressed before your next appointment.

The advice line is not an emergency service

If you require urgent medical advice you must contact your GP surgery or A&E.

How does the advice line work?

The advice is an answer phone service. Please leave the following information on the answer phone:

- Your full name
- Your hospital number or date of birth
- A telephone number where we can contact you
- The reason for your call

A senior rheumatology nurse will listen to your message and return your call as soon as possible from Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm.

If you are out when the nurse returns your call, one or two further attempt will be made to contact you. Following this if you still require advice you will need to contact the advice line again.

Advice line telephone numbers:

City Hospital Advice Line: 0121 507 5024

Mobile (City patients only): 07870 907 880

Email (City patients only): swb-tr-SWBH-GM-Rheum-Help@nhs.net

Sandwell Hospital Advice line: 0121 507 3983

Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu speaking Advice line: 0121 507 5607

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Tips on managing a joint flare

Balance between exercise and rest is important during joint flare. Here are some tips that may help you to manage your joint flare.

During a joint flare you will find your joints are:

- Very painful even at rest
- Tender to press
- Swollen
- Hot and possibly look red
- Difficult to move

Action Plan:

- Rest the joint in a comfortable position but avoid using pillows under your knees.
- Use the splints and supports provided.
- Move the joints within the limits of your pain.
- Pace your activities – take regular breaks in your activities.

Once the flare starts to resolve your joints will be:

- Painful on movement but not painful at rest
- Less hot and swollen

Action Plan:

- Increase the number of times you do each exercise your physiotherapist has given you.
- Pace your activities – take regular break.
- Spread tasks over the week.
- Remember not to 'over-do it' in one day.
- Plan in advance

When the joint flare resolves completely your joints may:

- Be painful at extremes of movements.
- Ache following activity.
- Be weak due to general muscle weakness.

Action Plan:

- Maintain range of movements and improve muscle strength by increasing repetition of exercises.
- Add resistance e.g. small weights.
- Beware of over-doing it
- Remember do not stop your medication without consulting your GP/Rheumatology Consultant/Nurse Specialist.

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Travel and vaccination advice

It is important to inform your rheumatologist if you are taking a lengthy holiday abroad.

If you are taking injectable medicines such as methotrexate we will discuss the possibility of switching you to a tablet form for the duration of your holiday.

If you are having regular blood tests, we will need to discuss the logistics of how this will happen if you will be away for a long period of time. You may need a letter with guidelines on drug monitoring from the rheumatology department to take with you to give to whoever will do your blood tests, so that they know what to perform and what to do if there is a problem.

If you are taking anti-TNF treatment (e.g. Enbrel, Humira, Cimzia) please contact your nurse specialist on the advice line to discuss issues such as drug storage, care with sharps, dietary advice and vaccinations.

If you are on an immunosuppressant drug such as:

- Azathioprine
- Methotrexate
- Leflunamide
- Mycophenolate Mofetil
- Cyclophosphamide
- Ciclosporin

you should **NOT** have the **live vaccines** yellow fever and polio. However you can have inactivated polio vaccines and other inactivated vaccines such as rabies and hepatitis B.

If you are taking prednisolone 10mg or more per day you should avoid live vaccines. However if you are taking prednisolone below 10mg per day you can have live vaccines.

If you are taking Hydroxychloroquine and have been prescribed Chloroquine as an anti-malarial you can stop your Hydroxychloroquine. If you have been given any other type of anti-malarial tablet, we advise you to continue to take Hydroxychloroquine.

If you have any questions about vaccinations or need other travel advice please do not hesitate to contact us on the advice line number on page 9.

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Rheumatoid arthritis research

Our Hospitals are involved in research into rheumatoid arthritis which is supported by Arthritis Research UK.

We are currently studying:

1. what is going on in the blood and joints of patients with arthritis with the aim of developing better treatments
2. different treatments for patients with rheumatoid arthritis to understand if some are better than others or if some work in particular types of patients but not others
3. how patients feel and behave when they develop their arthritis for the first time

To find out more about the research contact the research team on: 0121 507 5732.

Patient-user group

The rheumatology department has a patient user group which meets on the last Friday of every month in the rheumatology outpatient department at City hospital. The group is open to patients, relatives, and carers and offers support and advice to members and often has speakers attending. If you have any thoughts or ideas on how to improve the service you received this is the place to air your thoughts. Cakes and cold drinks are provided. If you are interested in joining the group please speak to your rheumatology nurse or consultant or pick up a flyer from the outpatient department.

Help with prescriptions and health costs

Help with health costs

Some people are entitled to help with some or all of their healthcare costs (prescriptions, hospital transport etc). To see if you may be entitled to help:

- See leaflet HC11 available at pharmacies, most post offices and GP's.
- Go online at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/helpwithhealthcosts Form HC11 can be downloaded in other languages from this website
- **Telephone:**
 - NHS low income scheme 0845 850 1166
 - Medical and Maternity Exemption Certificates 0845 850 0030
 - Tax Credit Exemption Certificates 0845 609 9299

Prescription pre-payment certificates

If you are not entitled to free NHS prescriptions and have to pay for 5 prescription items in 4 months, or 14 items in 12 months you may find it cheaper to buy a pre-payment certificate. You can purchase one:

- By calling 0845 850 0030
- Online at www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/helpwithhealthcosts
- By filling in Form FP95 (available from your pharmacy)

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

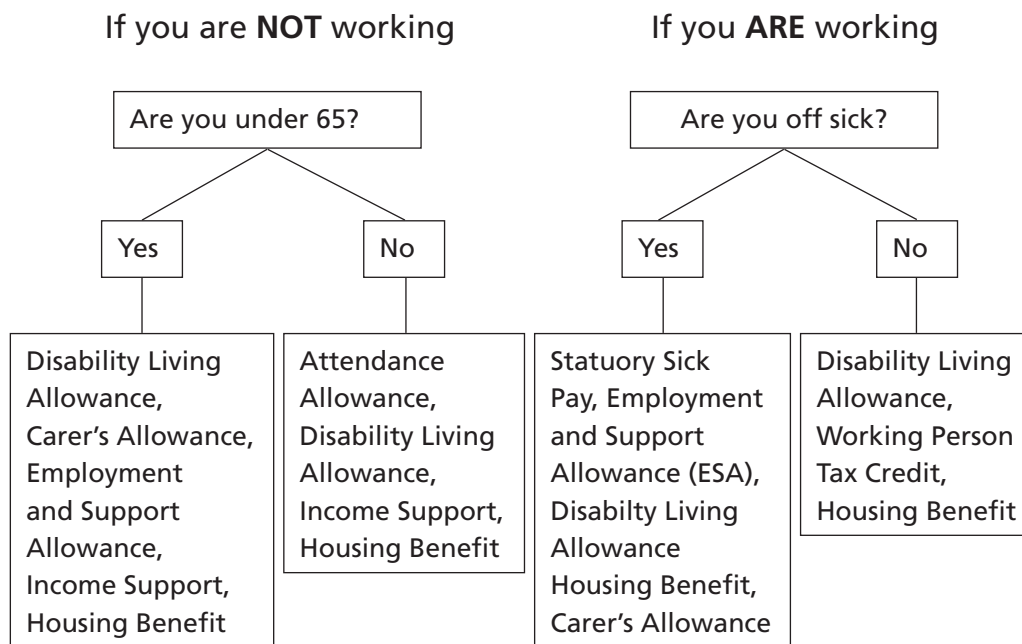
Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Benefits advice

If you have a long term chronic condition you may be entitled to additional benefits.

Follow the chart to see what benefits you may be entitled to or contact one of the telephone numbers or website addresses for help and advice. You can also refer to the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) booklet in clinic.



For more information about benefits:

Birmingham Arthritis Resource Centre (BARC)

0121 464 2708

BARC have appointments available for one to one benefit advice.

Benefit Enquiry Line

0800 882 200

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Birmingham District Telephone Advice Service

0121 248 4950

Sandwell (Oldbury) CAB

0121 552 2022

CAB website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

The CAB can also provide benefits advice in other languages.

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department

Information and advice for patients

Rheumatology

Useful contacts

Birmingham Arthritis Resource Centre

5th floor Birmingham Central Library, Birmingham City Centre

0121 464 2708

Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm

www.barc.org.uk

Arthritis Research UK

www.arthritisresearchuk.org

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society

www.nras.org.uk

Birmingham Disability Resource Centre

0121 789 7365

www.disability.co.uk

Sources used for the information in this leaflet

Citizens Advice Bureau, www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/your_money/benefits, accessed September 2011

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5420 or email: swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net



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