

Rheumatology Long Term Condition Review

Patient Initiated Follow-up (PIFU) Information Sheet



The Rheumatology Department in NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde has introduced a Patient Initiated Follow Up (PIFU) pathway for patients who have stable rheumatology conditions. It is designed to give you more control over the care that you receive. PIFU makes it easier for you to be seen quickly if or when you need it but cuts down unnecessary outpatient visits if you keep well.

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Rheumatology - How to contact us

Reason	Contact Number
To arrange a Patient Initiated Follow-up (PIFU)	☎ 01389 817562
Inverclyde Royal Hospital Rheumatology Advice Line	☎ 01475 504 561
Royal Alexandra Hospital Rheumatology Advice Line	☎ 0141 314 9557
Vale of Leven Hospital Rheumatology Advice Line	☎ 0141 314 9557
To arrange a Physiotherapy appointment	☎ 0141 531 3703
To speak with an Occupational Therapist	☎ 0141 531 3703
To arrange a Podiatry appointment	☎ 0141 347 8909

Some advice for managing your condition and guidance on when to contact the Rheumatology Department

Rheumatology medication

This should continue when you are on the PIFU pathway. Occasionally you may need to temporarily stop if there have been concerns regarding your blood tests or you have had a significant infection. There is no need to contact us about temporary changes, but if you are asked to completely stop a rheumatology medication, please let us know so that we can plan for how best to make sure your rheumatology condition remains under control.

Blood monitoring

We would like to remind you that if you are taking any Rheumatological medications such as Methotrexate, Sulfasalazine, Leflunomide or Azathioprine you will still need to make arrangements for regular blood monitoring at your GP practice.

Vaccination

If you are taking any of the medications above or a biologic medication, then we would recommend that you take up the offer for the 'flu vaccination, and you should be vaccinated once against pneumococcal disease (pneumonia). We also recommended that you attend for Covid-19 vaccine. If you are receiving treatment with rituximab the timing of your vaccine may need to be altered - please call us if necessary, via the advice line for the hospital you normally attend. Ideally you should avoid steroid injections two weeks before and after a Covid-19 vaccine. This is to maximise the benefits of the vaccine.

What to Do If You Get an Infection?

Most infections will be mild e.g. viral sore throat, and do not need antibiotics. However, if you have a high temperature or rash, feel shivery, unable to eat or drink or feel generally very poorly, we suggest you contact your GP to be assessed. If your GP determines that you need antibiotics or antivirals, please stop your Rheumatology medications until you complete the course of the antibiotics or antivirals.

What to do if you need surgery

In general you do not need to stop any of your Rheumatology medications before surgery unless specifically asked to do so by your pre-op assessment team or surgeon, or unless you have an infection. If you have any further questions please contact us via the Advice Line for the hospital you normally attend.

How to Manage a Flare up

Although there are many very good treatments for arthritis, we do not yet have a cure. You might still experience a flare of your condition. Most flares settle within a week to ten days. If your joints do flare up, please consider the following measures:

1. Rest the affected joint; remember to use your splints if you have them.
2. Try alternating warm and cold compresses.
3. Take your painkillers and or anti-inflammatory medicine as prescribed by your GP.
4. If these measures fail to settle the joint(s) or the pain and stiffness becomes worse, please contact the Advice Line for the hospital you normally attend.

Please remember that flare ups can happen occasionally even with very good control of your arthritis. This does not mean that your medications are not working. However, if you have more than three flare ups a year which last more than a week each time, please contact the Rheumatology Advice Line. This may mean that you will have to be re-assessed and perhaps have your Rheumatology medication adjusted.

Quit smoking

There is good evidence that some Rheumatology medications work better if you don't smoke. Whether you're ready to stop, just beginning to think about it, or are just looking for information, Quit Your Way Scotland is an advice and support service for anyone trying to stop smoking in Scotland. You can access by telephone 0800 848 484 or online via NHS Inform (see below). You can also get help to quit by talking to your local pharmacist.

Try to maintain a healthy weight

There are many things that affect our weight and health. These include the things that have happened to us and the things that we do. If you are overweight this can put additional strain on your joints. If you have lost weight because you have been poorly or not eating very much you could ask your GP or health professional for help. If you don't know why you have lost weight, see your GP or health professional. For more information on weight management please go to the NHS Inform website.

Pregnancy

If you are planning a pregnancy or are pregnant, please speak to your Rheumatology team about your medications and treatment plans as soon as possible. There are some treatments that you can take safely during pregnancy. You can find lots of information including how to make an appointment with a midwife, medications, folic acid and the Ready steady baby campaign on the NHS inform website.

Keeping active

It is important that you keep active and put your joints through a range of movement. There are many low impact exercises that you can do. Tai chi, Pilates and yoga are great low-impact activities that focus on improving your balance and core strength. Generally, these activities are accessible to everyone no matter your age or ability level and provide great health benefits. Regular exercise can also help boost your mood. You can search for a class near you as well as the particular type of class that suits you best on the NHS inform website. There are also many local community classes such as Live Well and Live Active.

Mental Health

It is not uncommon to have a low mood when you have a chronic condition such as arthritis. Advice on dealing with low mood, anxiety, phobias, stress and where you can get help are available via the NHS Inform website.

Fatigue

This is an unseen symptom of arthritis. It can be difficult to explain to others around you and difficult to manage. Try to get enough good quality sleep and rest. There is good advice on the patient group websites below and via local occupational therapy departments who may run classes on how to manage your fatigue levels.

Personal PIFU Plan

You and your rheumatology clinician might wish to use this space to make notes on your particular situation and a plan for any issues that crop up.

Some patients have told us that it would be helpful to have advice on when to contact rheumatology and when to contact their GP so it may be helpful to write this down.

If you have joint problems that are not part of your rheumatology condition it can also be helpful to write these down and where to get advice if needed in the future.

Support Organisations

You might like to visit some of the following useful sources:

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS)

🌐 www.nras.org.uk @ enquiries@nras.org.uk

🌐 www.nras.org.uk/pifu/ ☎ 0800 298 7650

Versus Arthritis

🌐 www.versusarthritis.org.uk @ helpline@versusarthritis.org

☎ 0800 5200 520

National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society (NASS)

🌐 www.nass.co.uk @ admin@nass.co.uk

☎ 02087 411515

PAPAA

(Charity for People with Psoriasis and Psoriatic Arthritis)

🌐 www.papaa.org @ info@papaa.org

☎ 01923 672837

NHS Inform

🌐 www.nhsinform.scot

Free phone/helpline: ☎ 0800 224 488

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

If you are unsure how to access the local services you need please contact our Support and Information Service

🌐 <https://www.nhsggc.scot/hospitals-services/services-a-to-z/support-and-information-services>

@ ggc.sis@nhs.scot

☎ 0141 532 7378

There may be a Support and Information Service at your local hospital.