

## Rheumatology – First Outpatient Appointment

### Introduction

Welcome to the Rheumatology Department.

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant that there are more people waiting for hospital appointments and treatment.

We know that it can be very difficult for many people who are waiting.

The NHS is working hard to see people as quickly as possible, but it is going to take a while before waiting times are back down to where they were before the COVID-19 pandemic began in the UK in early 2020.

Below, you will find some information that will help you to look after your health and wellbeing whilst you are waiting for your Rheumatology appointment.

### Guidance for Patients

General information on **rheumatological conditions** categorised by **condition**, **named medication** or **site of joint pain**, can be found at: [www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org)

If, while you are waiting for your appointment, you find you are struggling with managing your pain, please contact your GP. You can also find [help and advice on managing ongoing pain](#) on the NHS website, whilst the [Chartered Society of Physiotherapy](#) has some helpful information on managing pain.

While waiting for your appointment, it is also important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. To support our local residents to stop smoking or lose weight, the following services are available to provide free stop smoking and weight management support to our community.

**Call:** Andover War Memorial Hospital - 01962 863 535

Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital - 01256 473 202

Royal County Hampshire Hospital - 01962 863 535

**Email:** [myplannedcare@hhft.nhs.uk](mailto:myplannedcare@hhft.nhs.uk)

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

Health Lifestyles – We are here to help you and offer different levels of support to maintain a healthy weight and to stop smoking including telephone support, virtual and app-based support options.

**Stop Smoking Service** - <https://www.smokefreehampshire.co.uk/>. The stop smoking service provides a range of options to help you quit including support from an advisor, stop smoking medications, e-cigarettes and a digital offer for those who wish to quit by themselves.

If you are not ready to quit just yet but would like more information on how to protect your family, **Smoke Free Homes**, advises on how to make your home and car smoke free.

## My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

Weight Management Service - [www.shapeup4lifehampshire.co.uk](http://www.shapeup4lifehampshire.co.uk).

The service supports adults aged 18 years or over who want to lose weight and have been identified as obese.

### Find out your BMI

You can get help to lead a healthier lifestyle if you're an adult (18 years or over) living in Hampshire (but not Southampton or Portsmouth) and your body mass index (BMI) is above average. [Use the NHS calculator to find out your BMI](#). If it's too high, sign up for a programme that will help you lose weight.

#### BMI of 30+.

If your BMI is 30 or higher, you qualify for free support from [Shapeup4life Hampshire](#).

#### BMI of 28+

You can get free support from Shapeup4life Hampshire if you haven't paid to attend sessions with a commercial weight management provider in the last three months, and at least one of the following applies:

- you have Type 1 and 2 Diabetes or Metabolic Syndrome.
- you have problems with your heart, circulation, hypertension or high blood pressure.
- you have been diagnosed with anxiety/depression.
- you need to lose weight before receiving another medical treatment or surgery.
- you have a serious long-term health condition that is adversely affected by your weight such as muscular skeletal disorders (back pain, mobility issues) and asthma.
- you're from a black or ethnic minority background.

[Learn more and sign up with Shapeup4life Hampshire](#)

#### BMI of 25+

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher, [the NHS Weight Loss Plan](#) will help you start healthier eating habits, be more active, and start losing weight.

The [NHS 12 week fitness plan](#) will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

### Healthy eating and being active

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- [One You Eat Better](#) (website) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.

## My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

- **Better Health - Get Active** (website) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.
- **Sugar Smart** is a campaign to raise awareness of hidden sugars, recommended levels and healthy alternatives by encouraging individuals, groups, businesses, schools and organisation to join the campaign and make a pledge. To find out how you can join in, become sugar smart and make good choices about what you, your family, colleagues eat.

## What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your condition suddenly worsens while you are waiting, you should seek advice.

### Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

### GP surgeries are still open

If you experience an increase in pain or a significant reduction in mobility, you should in the first instance contact your General Practitioner for review and advice.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

A list of GP practices with relevant contact details are available on the following website:

<https://www.nhs.uk/Services/Trusts/GPs/DefaultView.aspx?id=163127>

## Contact Us

**Basingstoke:** 01256 312768

Email: [RheumatologyAdminBNH@hhft.nhs.uk](mailto:RheumatologyAdminBNH@hhft.nhs.uk)

**Winchester:** 01962 824150

Email: [RheumatologyadminRHCH@hhft.nhs.uk](mailto:RheumatologyadminRHCH@hhft.nhs.uk)

Please direct any My Planned Care enquiries to [myplannedcare@hhft.nhs.uk](mailto:myplannedcare@hhft.nhs.uk) or 01962 825 616.

