

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to provide some routine services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

The information is updated weekly and anyone can access it including your carer, friends, relatives and the NHS team caring for you.

You don't need to ring your GP, or the hospital caring for you for an update on waiting times because all the information is available on the My Planned Care website.

This guidance has been supported by clinicians who are responsible for your care to support and to help keep you well whilst waiting for your procedure.

Rheumatology: Infusion of Therapeutic Substance

Introduction

Rheumatology is a medical speciality that cares for a wide range of conditions affecting the musculoskeletal system. It is used to describe painful conditions of the joints, muscles and surrounding soft tissues.

We look after patients with Inflammatory Arthritis, Osteoarthritis and Connective tissue diseases such as Lupus, Systemic sclerosis or Vasculitis. We also see patients with soft tissue rheumatic complaints and fibromyalgia, although a lot of these conditions are now managed in GP practices.

Many of the conditions treated are linked with the immune system attacking different body tissues.

The Rheumatology Service is predominately outpatient based. Clinics are held either at Queen Elizabeth Hospital ,Kings Lynn or Outpatient Department, North Cambs Hospital,Wisbech.

What to bring to face to face clinics

Please bring a urine sample when you attend consultants/nurse clinics and a current list of your regular medication to all appointments.

You may be asked to come in to have a blood test, an X-ray or another form of a scan.

The rheumatology department offers the following clinics:

- Daily consultant or nurse specialist appointments
- Nurse-led blood monitoring
- Paediatric rheumatology
- Specialist nurses-led medication screening
- Physiotherapist and occupational health therapy including Hydrotherapy.
- Osteoporosis services including treatment initiation and monitoring
- DEXA scans for Osteoporosis.
- Early Inflammatory arthritis clinic where patient can have Ultrasound, Blood tests x-rays and start treatment same day.
- Physiotherapist led Spondyloarthritis clinic.
- General Rheumatology Clinics

We also provide Daycase treatments, including:

- Biologic and immunosuppressive infusion therapy
- Joint aspirations and injections
- Soft tissue injections

We offer specialist advice to inpatients as well as GP's. However, we do not provide an out of hours service. Our dedicated rheumatology occupational therapists and research team can also be accessed through the department.

Guidance for Patients

If your symptoms get worse this is known as a 'flare-up'. A flare is unpredictable and may start suddenly. It can last for hours, days, or even months if not treated. A flare may result in:

- Increased swelling
- Worsening pain
- More joint stiffness
- Increased tiredness
- Feeling generally unwell or feverish
- Decreased 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

During a flare you may need to:

- Adjust some of your medication. Taking painkillers and/or anti-inflammatory tablets regularly should help control and minimise the pain. Never exceed the maximum recommended dose. You should continue to take all your other medication as normal.
- If you are taking steroid tablets, it is important that you do not alter the dose without consulting your GP first.
- Anti-inflammatory gels may be applied locally to the affected joints following the manufacturer's instructions

There are other things you can do to help yourself which can soothe painful joints:

- Rest or exercise? During a flare it is important to pace your activities. This means planning the day, taking into consideration your increased tiredness. You may need to take short rests in between activities but remember to keep those joints moving. This reduces stiffness and maintains muscle tone. You may be reluctant to exercise flaring joints, but it will help.
- Wearing wrist splints may help reduce pain by keeping the joint in a neutral position. Try to avoid putting pressure through an inflamed joint.
- Relaxation, distraction or imagery may help. This may include listening to music or picturing yourself in a pleasant environment.
- Heat therapy includes wheat bags, a hot water bottle or electric heat pads (make sure these are wrapped in a towel so as not to burn yourself) and place on the painful joint or even having a warm bath or shower.
- Cold therapy includes wheat bags, bag of frozen peas, bag of ice cubes, gel pack or a bowl of water with ice cubes for hands or feet. Make sure these are wrapped in a towel before placing on your joint. Heat and cold treatments should be applied for up to 15 minute intervals, with the exception of iced water where 5 minutes is acceptable.

Further Help

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

Arthritis UK

Website: Versus Arthritis Telephone: 0800 5200 520 Mansfield Arthritis support group

Telephone: 01623 844989

South Forest Arthritis Self-help Group (Arthritis Care in England)

Telephone: 01623 642596

NASS National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society Website: National Axial Spondyloarthritis

Society Telephone: 020 8741 1515

NRAS (National Rheumatoid Arthritis Support) Website: National Rheumatoid Arthritis Support - HELP Telephone: 0800 298 7650

How you can support yourself while you wait for your procedure

There are things you can do whilst you wait for your procedure to make you sure you are as healthy and strong as you can be. This will increase your chances of a better recovery. In the time leading up to your procedure, be sure to take good care of yourself by taking a few smart steps. This can help you avoid complications. Follow these simple tips to ensure the best possible outcome and prepare for a successful recovery.

Take Your Medication

You will be advised to continue with your normal medications, but you may be advised to stop some medications before your procedure, your clinician or pre-operative nurse will provide you with this information.

Improve Your Health

- Stick to healthy foods - Your body needs good nutrition to fight infection and heal following your procedure.
- Avoid dehydration - drink at least six-eight glasses of fluid per day, preferably water.
- Avoid constipation - drink plenty of fluids and increase the amount of fibre in your diet. If this does not help you can attend your local pharmacy for over the counter remedies.

Smoking

If you are coming into hospital for a procedure, and you are a smoker, we strongly advise you to stop smoking as soon as possible because this will help to improve wound healing, lung function and you will make the best possible recovery. Now is a better time than ever to stop smoking. Smoking before procedure puts you at a higher risk for post-operative heart attacks, stroke, blood clots, pneumonia and even death.

The Smokefree Norfolk service provides a range of options to help you quit including podcasts, stop smoking medications and e-cigarettes. The information can be accessed at www.smokefreenorfolk.nhs.uk.

Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on your body but importantly it can reduce your body's ability to heal. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits or lower to improve your ability to heal after your procedure.

Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE) before procedure

There are natural ways and lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of developing blood clots, these include

- Staying active: make a point of moving every 30-60 minutes to ensure you keep your blood flowing
- Regular exercise – simply walking for 30 minutes a day is a great way to keep your circulation moving
- Maintain a healthy weight

- Keep hydrated.

Your doctor will assess your risk of developing a blood clot when you come into hospital and order a treatment plan to minimise your risk. This may include prescribed medications before or after procedure, or when you go home, to prevent blood clots.

Keep Moving

Exercise regularly. Among other benefits, better fitness levels reduce complications when having any procedure. This allows you to leave hospital and return to your normal quality of life more quickly. Keeping an active lifestyle is good for your health and if you are normally an active person it is important to keep that up before your procedure. People with low activity levels can improve their fitness levels within as little as 4 weeks. This gives you an opportunity to get fitter before your procedure and improve your chances of a better and quicker recovery.

Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about having a procedure, relaxation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises can all help. It's important that you ask for help if you feel you need it, and your GP practice can advise you on support in your local area.

Please keep in touch with your GP or mental health professional if you are already under their care for depression or anxiety.

There is also a range of mental health support available locally – please look at the website for more information:

<https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/> or phone them on 0300 123 1503.

Other local support services can be found on [the NHS website](#)

General information

Please watch this useful [video](#) from the Royal College of Anaesthetists which offers advice on preparing for a procedure.

There is also some useful information available on keeping well on the [Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System \(While you wait - Norfolk and Waveney CCG\)](#) website.

Further information about local services offering support in Norfolk and Waveney is available [here](#).

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you feel that there is a change in your condition please contact your clinical team through the hospital switchboard.

If your condition suddenly worsens whilst 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. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit www.nhs.uk

Life Threatening Emergencies

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

Contact Us

Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System have developed the [While you wait - Norfolk and Waveney CCG](#) to provide you with information about waiting for hospital treatment.