

## Rheumatology

### Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective 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 whilst waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care. The Rheumatology team deal with the diagnosis and management of inflammatory arthritis and auto-immune conditions, including Rheumatoid arthritis and Lupus.

### What Treatments are available?

Your Diagnosis will determine your treatment pathway, this can include; management by your GP, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and/or initiation of medications recommended by your consultant.

The majority of Rheumatology medications require screening, then education with a specialist nurse prior to commencement, with regular blood tests during treatment.

Rheumatology treatments include oral medications, subcutaneous (below the skin) or intramuscular (into a muscle) injections, or intravenous (via a drip) infusions. Management can also include joint injections.

Treatment plans are based on guidelines by the Royal Society of Rheumatology, and NICE, these are readily available on the internet.

### Guidance for Patients

If your condition worsens prior to your appointment with us, please contact your GP surgery as they can write to Rheumatology to request an earlier appointment, if deemed appropriate.

Self-management is encouraged with analgesics for pain, possibly a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory, if your GP agrees and prescribes. If you have swollen joints apply ice therapy, please ensure you protect your skin from ice burns – wrap ice in plastic bag, then a towel, prior to placing on skin for 10 minute intervals.

Whilst you are waiting for your appointment, it is always important to maintain a healthy lifestyle. St Helens Wellbeing service makes it easier to access a wide range of healthy living and wellbeing support through a 'one stop shop'. The service provides local residents with advice and help with healthy eating, exercise, weight management, stopping smoking, emotional and social wellbeing, oral health and volunteering.

**Call:** 01744 371111

**Email:** [chcp.sthelens@nhs.net](mailto:chcp.sthelens@nhs.net)

# **My Planned Care Patient Information Platform**

**Website:** [www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk](http://www.sthelenswellbeing.org.uk)

**Additional Information for Rheumatology Services can be found on:**

**St Helens and Knowsley Teaching Hospital NHS Trust website –**

**[www.sthk.nhs.uk/our-services](http://www.sthk.nhs.uk/our-services)**

**Our services**

**Rheumatology**