

## Rheumatology - Subcutaneous Injection

### Introduction

The COVID-19 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 are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

When you are waiting for further treatment it can sometimes feel like a long wait. The information and advice here is aimed at helping you manage that wait so you arrive for your appointment in the best possible physical and mental health.

The NHS has limited resources which means that we are unable to treat you as quickly as we would like. Each healthcare provider has to consider the type of help you need, how quickly you need treatment, the best course of action to help you and when and where you can be seen.

The process of sorting patients based on their individual needs is called prioritisation. The system of prioritisation is applied consistently across the NHS to help us to decide the order in which patients receive their treatment. This is essential to ensure that we provide care based on need. The system means that care is delivered in the fairest way possible.

Once a referral has been made from primary care to secondary care, the specialist team conduct assessments and then agree with you on the right course of action. At this stage, the urgency will be assessed. If you have a long-term health condition, for example, you may need treatment faster than someone without.

The Rheumatology service aims to provide comprehensive and individual care for patients with joint problems, multi-systems inflammatory disorders, bone health such as osteoporosis and a variety of other joint and muscle problems.

### Guidance for Patients

Following your initial appointment your physician or practitioner may feel it is appropriate for you to have an injection into your muscle or joint space. This is to help control the disease by reducing any inflammation. This injection will normally take place during your appointment.

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

If your symptoms get worse this is known as a 'flare-up'

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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. Hot and cold treatments should be applied for up to 15 minute intervals, with the exception of iced water where 5 minutes is acceptable.

Support groups and further information:

Arthritis Care & Research : <http://www.versusarthritis.org>

- The Psoriasis and Psoriatic Alliance: <http://www.papaa.org>

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- National Ankylosing Spondylosis Society: <http://www.nass.co.uk>

- Lupus UK: <http://www.lupusuk.org.uk>

- Scleroderma Society: <http://www.sclerodermasociety.co.uk>

- British Sjogrens Syndrome Association: <http://www.bssa.uk.net>

- Vasculitis UK: <http://www.vasculitis.org.uk>

- Back Pain: Low back pain and sciatica

<https://www.sheffieldachesandpains.com/back-and-neck/home/>

<https://www.backcare.org.uk>

### 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.

### Contact Us

If you have been referred and have a query about your appointment please contact the appointments line:

Poole Hospital: 03000 19 5288

Christchurch Hospital: 03000 19 4740 (option 4)

If you have concerns relating to your condition or treatment, which cannot wait until your next appointment, you can call the Rheumatology Advice Line for advice and support from a member of the Rheumatology Practitioner team. If we are busy we may be unable to answer your call immediately, so please be prepared to leave a brief message.

Christchurch: Tel 0300 019 5302

Poole: Tel 0300 019 2849