We understand that many people with rheumatology conditions and their carers will be very concerned about coronavirus. The information below explains how we will manage your care over the coming months. We are following guidance from NHS England and British Society for Rheumatology.

**RHEUMATOLOGY CONTACT DETAILS**

**CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS**

- If you are worried you may have coronavirus symptoms click on the following link to find out what to do: [111 online coronavirus service](#)

- Only call 111 if you cannot get help online.

**NON URGENT RHEUMATOLOGY ADVICE**

- Email: haywood.advice@nhs.net

- If you need non-urgent advice regarding your rheumatology condition or medications an email address has been set up to take pressure off our telephone advice line which has been overwhelmed with calls during the current crisis.

- Emails will be checked daily from Monday to Friday and one of our senior nurses or doctors will aim to respond to you within 2 working days.

**APPOINTMENT QUERIES**

Telephone 01782 673643
URGENT RHEUMATOLOGY ADVICE

- The telephone advice line for patients and carers is **01782 673687**.
- We will aim to respond to you within 1 working day but please be aware it may take longer than usual.

WHAT IS CORONAVIRUS AND WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

For more information visit:
- [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
- [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)
CORONAVIRUS UPDATE FOR RHEUMATOLOGY PATIENTS

Click on the image below to open a video created by the Rheumatology team at The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust. They have kindly given us permission to share with our rheumatology patients. It gives an update on coronavirus specific to rheumatology patients and explains how to tell if you are at increased risk (use Wi-Fi to avoid data charges on your phone).

Once you have watched the video please spare 2 minutes to give us your feedback on this video by clicking on the following link: Feedback COVID-19 Rheumatology Video

This will be useful to decide if any changes are needed to the video.
WHAT ABOUT MY APPOINTMENTS?

- To keep you safe, we are no longer providing face-to-face appointments unless deemed essential by the rheumatology team.

- The Rheumatology Department is currently extremely short staffed as many of our staff have been called to other hospital areas to help with the coronavirus crisis.

- Currently our service will be for urgent/emergency rheumatology patients only who will either receive a telephone call or arrange a face to face appointment if necessary.

- Your clinic appointment may be postponed for a few months or changed to a telephone call. You will be contacted about this.

WHAT ABOUT MY BLOOD MONITORING?

- Blood monitoring must continue when you are taking your arthritis medication.

- If you have had a new cough or fever in the last 7 days or anyone in your household has had these symptoms in the last 14 days: Do NOT attend for blood monitoring - please call the advice line instead (Tel: 01782 673687).

- We will contact you if it is safe for you to have your blood tests performed less often. If you do not hear from us, please attend your blood monitoring appointment at your appointed time only. Please avoid bringing relatives into the hospital.

- More frequent monitoring may be required if there is a significant change in your health or medication, so we need to be informed of this by you or your GP.
WHAT ABOUT MY MEDICATION?

- All patients can **CONTINUE** to take their arthritis medication (such as methotrexate, leflunomide, sulphasalazine and biologics) unless directed otherwise by their rheumatology team.

- If you develop symptoms of infection, such as **persistent cough** or **high temperature** you should **STOP** your arthritis medication immediately until you feel well.

- The exceptions are:
  - If you are taking hydroxychloroquine (Plaquenil) this can be continued.
  - If you are on long term steroid tablets (prednisolone) this **MUST** be continued. **DO NOT** stop this suddenly.
  - Although COVID guidance suggests sulfasalazine can be continued, we recommend stopping it (until you feel well) in case you are developing another infection.

- If you are planning to start or switch to a new medication this may need to be reviewed.

- If your arthritis flares up, we advise managing it with simple painkillers such as paracetamol.

- Anti-inflammatory can still be used providing you do not have an underlying medical condition (such as severe kidney problems) or you are taking other medications (such as warfarin) that means they should be avoided.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I DEVELOP SYMPTOMS?

- Please refer to national advice and guidance by visiting [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)
AM I AT HIGHER RISK OF CORONAVIRUS? WHAT DO I NEED TO DO?

- Some people are at higher risk than others and you may already have had a letter from the NHS about this, in which case please follow the advice sent to you.

- Full guidelines can be found at [111 online coronavirus service](#).

- Follow the **three steps** in the table below to understand your own risk. Start at step one, if the answer is **NO** then move to the next step.

- The video above produced by The Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust describes a 4 step scoring process but we have simplified it down to 3 steps as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STEP 1</th>
<th>STEP 2</th>
<th>STEP 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you take any of the following medicines?</td>
<td>Do you take steroids (prednisolone)?</td>
<td>Do you have any other features?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IF YES</td>
<td>IF YES</td>
<td>IF YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Add 1 point</strong> (up to a maximum of 2 points) for EACH of the following:</td>
<td><strong>Add 3 points:</strong> if you take 20mg a day or more for over 4 weeks</td>
<td><strong>Add 1 point</strong> if you have one or more of the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Are aged &gt;70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Methotrexate
- Leflunomide
- Azathioprine
- Mycophenolate (MMF)
- Ciclosporin
- Rituximab within 12 months
- Etanercept, benapali, enbrel, adalimumab, hyrimoz, infliximab, golimumab, certolizumab
- Tociluzimab; Abatacept; Belimumab; Anakinra;
- Secukinumab; Ixekizumab; Ustekinumab; Sarilumumab; Canakinumab
- Baracitinib, tofacitinib

**OR**

**Add 3 points** if you have had cyclophosphamide in the last 6 months

**Add 2 points:**
- if you take 5mg a day or more (but less than 20mg a day) for over 4 weeks
- If less than 5mg per day

- Diabetes
- Chronic (long-term) kidney problems
- Chronic lung problems
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease (angina, or heart attack)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORE = 0-3</th>
<th>SCORE 0-3</th>
<th>SCORE 0-1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**TOTAL UP YOUR SCORE FROM STEP 1-3**
### WHAT DOES YOUR SCORE MEAN?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCORE 0</th>
<th>You are at <strong>NORMAL</strong> risk - follow government advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCORE 1-2</td>
<td>You are at <strong>MODERATE</strong> risk - follow government social distancing advice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCORE 3 OR MORE</td>
<td>You are at <strong>HIGH</strong> risk - see below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have a **NORMAL** or **MODERATE** risk score:

You **must** stay at home to help stop the spread of coronavirus (this is in line with the government advice). You should only leave the house for 1 of 4 reasons:

1. shopping for essentials such as food and medicine (as infrequently as possible)
2. one form of exercise a day, such as a run, walk, or cycle – alone or with members of your household only
3. essential medical needs
4. travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home
If you have a **HIGH risk score**:

You are at significant risk of getting seriously ill if you get coronavirus. For this reason the government has issued strict guidelines for patients about **SHIELDING** (see further details below). If you have not already started to then you must start self-isolating (SHIELDING) for 12 weeks up to Sunday 21st June.

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**IF YOU ARE HIGH RISK (SCORE 3 OR MORE) - IMPORTANT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU SAFE FROM CORONAVIRUS**

- Your safety and the care and treatment you need are a priority for the NHS. The information here gives you advice on how to protect yourself and access the care and treatment you need.

- You may have scored yourself as high or the NHS/our rheumatology team may have identified you, or the named person you care for, as someone at risk of severe illness if you catch Coronavirus (also known as COVID-19). This is because you have an underlying disease or health condition that means if you catch the virus, you are more likely to be admitted to hospital than others.

- The safest course of action is for you to stay at home at all times and avoid all face-to-face contact for at least twelve weeks from today, except from carers and healthcare workers who you must see as part of your medical care. This will protect you by stopping you from coming into contact with the virus.
• If you are in touch with friends, family or a support network in your community, who can support you to get food and medicine, follow the advice in this letter. If you do not have contacts who can help support you please go to www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable or call 0800 0288327, the Government’s dedicated helpline.

• If, at any point, you think you have developed symptoms of coronavirus you can seek clinical advice using the simple online 111 service to help you check if you have any of the symptoms and give advice on what to do: 111 online coronavirus service

If you do not have access to the internet, call NHS 111. Do this as soon as you get symptoms.

These are the strict measures you or the person you care for should follow:

• Please refer to national advice and guidance by visiting www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

If the rest of your household are able to follow this guidance, there is no need for them to take the full protective measures to keep you safe.

You will still get the medical care you need during this period. We are considering alternative options for your care and will be in touch if any changes are needed. Your hospital care team will be doing the same.

WE ALSO STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE FOLLOWING ADVICE:

1. Carers and support workers who come to your home
Any essential carers or visitors who support you with your everyday needs can continue to visit, unless they have any of the symptoms of coronavirus.

All visitors should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds on arrival and often.

It is also a good idea to speak to your carers about what happens if one of them becomes unwell.

If you need help with care but you’re not sure who to contact please visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable

2. Medicines that you routinely take

The government is helping pharmacies to deliver prescriptions.

Prescriptions will continue to cover the same length of time as usual.

You may also need to arrange for collection or delivery of hospital specialist medication that is prescribed to you by your hospital care team.

If you do not currently have your prescriptions collected or delivered, you can arrange this by:
1. Asking someone who can pick up your prescription from the local pharmacy (this is the best option if possible).
2. Contacting your pharmacy to ask them to help you find a volunteer (who will have been ID checked) or deliver it to you.
3. Planned hospital appointments

- NHS England has written to your hospitals to ask them to review any ongoing care that you have with them.

- It is possible that some clinics and appointments will be cancelled or postponed.

- Your hospital or clinic will contact you if any changes need to be made to your care or treatment otherwise you should assume your care or treatment is taking place as planned.

- Please contact your hospital or clinic directly if you have any questions about a specific appointment.

4. Support with daily living

- Please discuss your daily needs during this period of staying at home with carers, family, friends, neighbours or local community groups to see how they can support you.

- If you do not have anyone who can help you, please visit: [www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable)
  You should receive a letter detailing this information which you can use as evidence for your employer to show that you cannot work outside the home.

- You do not need to get a fit note from your GP.

- If you need help from the benefit system please visit: [www.gov.uk/universal-credit](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit)
5. Urgent medical attention

- If you have an urgent medical question relating to your existing medical condition or the condition of the person you are caring for please contact us or your specialist hospital care team directly.

- Where possible you will be supported by phone or online.

- If your clinician decides you need to be seen in person, the NHS will contact you to arrange a visit in your home, or where necessary, treatment in hospital.

- To help the NHS provide you with the best care if you need to go to hospital as a result of catching coronavirus, we ask that you prepare a single hospital bag. This should include:
  1. Your emergency contact details
  2. List of the medications you take (including dose and frequency)
  3. Any information on your planned care appointments
  4. Things you would need for an overnight stay (snacks, pyjamas, toothbrush, medication etc.).
  5. If you have an advanced care plan please include that.

6. Looking after your mental well-being

- We understand that this may be a worrying time and you may find staying at home and having limited contact frustrating.

- It can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour, which can make you feel worse.

- Simple things you can do to stay mentally and physically active during this time include:
1. Look for ideas for exercise to do at home on the NHS website.
2. Spend time doing things you enjoy – reading, cooking and other indoor hobbies.
3. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water and exercise regularly.
4. Try to avoid smoking, alcohol and recreational drugs.
5. Try spending time with the windows open to let in fresh air, arranging spaces to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight.
6. Get out into the garden or sit on your doorstep if you can, keeping a distance of at least 2 metres from others.

You can find additional mental wellbeing advice and support from the following resources:


Mental Health Foundation: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus)


**USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS:**

111 Online Coronavirus Service
[https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19](https://111.nhs.uk/covid-19)

NHS UK
[www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)

Public Health England
Public Health England - Get coronavirus support as an extremely vulnerable person
www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable

If you need financial support with benefits:
www.gov.uk/universal-credit

NRAS (National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society)
www.nras.org.uk/coronavirus

Mind
www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Mental Health Foundation
www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus

Every Mind Matters
RHEUMATOLOGY CONTACT DETAILS

Email: haywood.advice@nhs.net

- If you need non-urgent advice regarding your rheumatology condition or medications an email address has been set up to take pressure off our telephone advice line which has been overwhelmed with calls during the current crisis.
- Emails will be checked daily from Monday to Friday and one of our senior nurses or doctors will aim to respond to you within 2 working days.

Telephone advice line: 01782 673687

Appointments: 01782 673643

Please be aware it may take longer than usual for us to respond to you but we will aim to get back to you as soon as possible.

Lastly we want to wish you well during these naturally worrying times.

Please stay safe and reach out to friends, loved ones or the amazing community support you will no doubt have around you (ensuring social distancing and self-isolation measures).

We are still here to help support you.

From your Haywood Rheumatology Team