

## Rheumatology patient helpline: 01296 255770

### What is the telephone helpline service?

The helpline is an answerphone service run by the Rheumatology Specialist Nurses. It is a service for patients under the care of the rheumatology team at the Trust for advice and information about your condition or medication.

You may leave a message on the helpline answerphone from Monday – Friday (excluding Bank Holidays) between 8am and 12 noon.

**The helpline is NOT an Emergency Service.  
If you have an urgent problem, you should contact your GP or other emergency services as appropriate.**

### When should I use the helpline?

- ❖ If you are experiencing a 'flare' of your symptoms and need information and advice.
- ❖ If you think you may be having side-effects from your medication or from treatment administered in the rheumatology department.
- ❖ If you have been asked to contact the department by one of the rheumatology team.
- ❖ If you require information and advice which cannot wait until your next scheduled appointment.

### What information should I leave in my answerphone message?

- ❖ Please listen carefully to all the options.
- ❖ Press option 4 for leaving a message for the Specialist Nurses
- ❖ Please speak slowly and clearly and leave the following information:
  - your full name
  - your patient number (MRN) **OR** NHS number **OR** date of birth.
  - a phone number you can be contacted on for a return call.
  - a brief message about the problem or the information required.

## When will someone get back to me?

- We will usually call you back within 2 working days, but this may take longer at busy times.
- The call back will be between 8.30am and 5.30pm, Monday to Friday (excluding Bank Holidays).
- Patients are responded to in date order and according to clinical need.
- We will only make 2 attempts to return your call and the call may show as 'withheld or unknown number' on your phone.

### Please note:

- Please do not leave duplicate messages or call the rheumatology secretaries.
- Relatives or carers can leave a message but due to confidentiality we can only respond to the patient unless we have explicit instructions that we may contact relatives on the patient's behalf.

### Useful numbers:

**Main hospital switchboard:**  
01296 315000

**General appointment queries:**  
01296 838888

**Radiology appointment queries:**  
01296 316900

**Occupational Therapy:**  
01296 315097

**Podiatry: 01296 831110**

**Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): 01296 831120**

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Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

### How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

### Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email [bht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:bht.pals@nhs.net)