

Further information can be obtained from:

Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases
Upper Borough Walls
Bath
BA1 1RL

Phone: 01225 473408 – Biologic patients
01224 428823 – Rheumatology advice line

Website : www.rnhrd.nhs.uk

We value your feedback.

Your comments, suggestions, praise and complaints will help us to improve the standard of our services.

Please contact PALS to feedback your views on the hospital

Tel: 01225 473424 or email PALS@rnhrd.nhs.uk

www.rnhrd.nhs.uk

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Rheumatic Diseases
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Your Min

Rheumatology

Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases

Patient Information Leaflet

What to do if you have a flare

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NHS Foundation Trust

Flare-ups

The symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis vary from person to person. They can come and go, and they may change over time. You will experience flare-ups when, from time to time, your condition worsens and your symptoms become more intense and severe. This may be fairly short term or may last weeks. A flare can be painful and frustrating, and as well as joint pain, swelling, fatigue and stiffness, you may also feel low in mood.

A flare may occur following an infection, surgery or when you are stressed. Sometimes however there is no obvious cause. Some people are able to recognise when a flare is going to happen, as their symptoms start getting worse over a period of days, but for many people they can wake up in flare with no warning, or it develops in a matter of hours.

It is possible to self-manage flares with a few days of rest and taking prescribed analgesia and anti-inflammatory medications. In some cases where the symptoms do not improve you may need to see a health care professional. This may be your GP or one of your rheumatology team to discuss treatment options. This can include short-term management with steroids or if your flares are persistent or occur on a regular basis you may need your treatment plan revisiting.

If you have a flare you can contact:

- Your GP
- The Rheumatology Advice Line on 01225 428823
- At times, when a nurse specialist is not available, you may be asked to contact your consultant's secretary via the main hospital switchboard on 01225 465941.

The Rheumatology Telephone Advice Line

To use the advice line call (01225) 428823

You will be invited to leave a message and a nurse specialist will return your call as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to return your call the same day, although during busy clinical periods, this may take up to 48 hours. When leaving a message, please state your name, telephone number, hospital number and reason for your call. Please speak slowly and clearly so that all details can be documented.

As this number is an answerphone service please do not leave any calls that require urgent action, as it may be some time before staff are available to retrieve calls dependent on their clinical commitments.

The advice line is intended to *supplement* the advice of your GP, not to replace it.

The advice line is available from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm excluding bank holidays. If you need advice outside office hours, please telephone the hospital switchboard on 01225 465941 and ask to speak to the senior rheumatology nurse or doctor on call. This is not an emergency service - in an emergency contact your GP, NHS Direct or emergency services.

Contacting the hospital by email

If you are unable to use the telephone to communicate you can email the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) PALS@rnhrd.nhs.uk

PALS will support your communication with specialist nurses and other staff in the hospital.