

Patient Information

Rheumatology Direct Access System

What is Direct Access?

Direct Access is an alternative way of managing the care of many rheumatology patients. This system of care is safe, reliable and well-liked by the patients who have been using it.

Traditionally, patients with stable Rheumatoid Arthritis and Psoriatic Arthritis would be given a routine outpatient appointment every 6-12 months. In the Direct Access system of care, patients are reviewed on a 2-yearly basis with the nurse advice line available for patients to ring themselves when they feel they need advice/or to be seen.

What are the benefits of being cared for under the Direct Access System?

At times it may be that at some appointments, your arthritis has been fine and you feel that it would have been more beneficial to be seen when your arthritis is more troublesome. However, it is often very difficult to get you an appointment when your arthritis is troublesome under the traditional system of care. Direct Access means you can contact us when **you feel that you need to be seen** and if necessary, you will be reviewed by a rheumatology nurse specialist in the closest clinic to your home, within 2-3 weeks.

How do I contact the Hospital?

There is a **confidential** telephone advice line within the Rheumatology department. This is an **answer phone service** which operates between **08-30am-12-30 on a Monday and 12 midday to 4 pm on a Thursday**. You may be contacted the same day; however, if you leave a message outside of the advice line hours, you will be contacted when the advice line is next available.

To make an advice line call, please:

1. Dial the advice line number **07816068390**.
2. Wait for the message on the answer phone to finish.
3. Listen for the **tone** at the end of the message before you begin.
4. Say:
 - The date and time of your call.
 - Your full name.
 - Your date of birth.
 - Your telephone contact number and a convenient time for us to call.
 - A very short message clearly spoken about the reason for your call.
 - End the call.

Will I still be able to see my GP about my arthritis?

Yes. Your GP will receive a letter explaining the Direct Access service, and how your arthritis is now being managed in this way.

The Rheumatology department will still be directly involved in the management of your arthritis and available to offer advice and support. If your GP has any concerns they can contact the Rheumatology team.

In what circumstances should I use the advice line?

The advice line is only for issues related to your rheumatoid arthritis / psoriatic arthritis and no other general health issues. You should see your GP about these. It is **not an emergency service** and for urgent medical help you must see your GP, out of hour's service, or local Emergency Department.

If I request an appointment, how long will I have to wait to be seen?

We will arrange for you to be seen in the next available Direct Access clinic closest to your home or Nevill Hall Hospital Rheumatology Day Unit if needed to be seen sooner. In most cases this should be within 2-3 weeks or sooner if this is possible.

Will I be discharged from the Rheumatology system if I do not need to make regular appointments?

No. You are on the rheumatology Direct Access system of care with 2 yearly appointments (or when needed). The whole idea of the service is to give you the freedom and choice to contact us when you feel the need to, and to encourage self – management of your condition.

The Direct Access system of care gives you the opportunity to manage your arthritis in partnership with the rheumatology team.