

## Frequently Asked Questions about my rheumatology medication

This leaflet answers some of the most asked questions from patients taking medication for their rheumatology conditions. If you have a question that is not answered or have a concern about your condition, please call the telephone advice line.

### Should I still take my rheumatology medicines if I feel otherwise well?

**Yes.** Our current advice is that all patients should keep taking their rheumatology medicines as recommended by their Rheumatology Team. Although many of the rheumatology medicines may reduce the body's natural defence (immune system), stopping your rheumatology medicines may cause your condition to flare up, which may then need even stronger medicines to get the condition back under control.

### If I develop an infection, should I continue my rheumatology medication?

If you develop symptoms of an infection (e.g. new cough, shortness of breath or fever), we suggest that you stop your rheumatology medicines (e.g. methotrexate or biologic therapy) while you have symptoms of the infection or you are on antibiotic treatment. **When you feel well again, you should restart your rheumatology medicines.** If you are taking steroids, you should continue these, as stopping them suddenly can make you very unwell.

### Should I stop my anti-inflammatory medicines (also known as NSAIDs, e.g., Ibuprofen, Naproxen etc.)?

Current advice is that you should continue to take the lowest dose you need to help control your arthritis symptoms. Up to date advice on this can be found at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/nsaids/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/nsaids/)

### When do I start my Biologic?

At least 2-3 weeks after all your blood test results and X-ray report are back.

### Can I have the Covid-19 vaccine?

Yes, but please delay DMARDs and Biologic for 1 week.

### Can I have the annual flu vaccine?

Yes, but not on the same day as your immunosuppressants.

### Can I have vaccine for shingles?

**NO, NEVER the live version!!**

**YES, only the NON-LIVE version called SHINGRIX.**

## Can I have an MMR vaccine?

- Biologic – **NO**.
- Methotrexate – discuss with the specialist nurse.

## Where can I get my medication from (for newly diagnosed patients)?

Your clinician will give you your first prescription in clinic. After that, subsequent prescriptions will be from your GP.

## Where can I have the QuantiFERON blood test?

At the Royal Berkshire Hospital or at Bracknell Healthspace. You can book an appointment for a blood test at one of these locations online: [https://www.swiftqueue.co.uk/royal\\_berkshire.php](https://www.swiftqueue.co.uk/royal_berkshire.php)

## How often do I have to have blood tests?

When you first start DMARD, Biologic or start a new medication regime, you will have two-weekly blood monitoring for 6 weeks, then monthly thereafter. Once your condition is stable on the medication, your blood tests will be every 3 months.

**If any of your blood test results show any abnormalities, a nurse will contact you.**

## How do I get my results if I have a CT or MRI scan?

Scan results takes about 2-4 weeks to come back to us. The clinician will write to you once the result is back.

## What if I need more blood test forms?

Please leave a message on the advice line 0118 322 6574.

## Can I have a Depo or steroids if I am having a flare up?

Yes, please contact your GP or the advice line to speak to a nurse.

## My GP has stopped my medication, what do I do?

Have a repeat blood test, and then contact the advice line.

## Can I change the day I take my methotrexate?

Yes, to later (two or three days at the latest) but not earlier.

## Can I switch to the sub-cutaneous version of methotrexate?

Yes, please contact the advice line to speak to a nurse.

## I have not heard from Healthcare at Home about delivery and training for my injection. What should I do?

Contact the advice line on 0118 322 6574 or CAT 9 on 0118 322 7969 or email [rbb-tr.CAT9@nhs.net](mailto:rbb-tr.CAT9@nhs.net).

## My Biologic meds are finished, and Healthcare at Home hasn't received a prescription from the hospital, what should I do?

Please contact CAT 9 on 0118 322 7969 and ask them to check EPR for your prescription.

## I received a 'did not attend' letter for a blood test, I have now booked one for next week. Do I need to do anything else?

If you have rebooked, we will see the result. There is no need to contact us. We will get in touch if your blood test result is abnormal.

If you haven't rebooked, please contact your GP to arrange one as soon as possible or alternatively, book an appointment at one of these locations online:

[https://www.swiftqueue.co.uk/royal\\_berkshire.php](https://www.swiftqueue.co.uk/royal_berkshire.php)

## I have missed a call from the nurse, what should I do?

Please **do not call us back**; we will try you again shortly. However, please be aware that calls from the hospital are usually displayed as '**undisclosed**' or '**withheld**'.

## Where can I find more information about my condition and medication?

- [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) and [www.111.nhs.uk](http://www.111.nhs.uk)
- Royal Osteoporosis Society: 0808 800 0035 [www.theros.org.uk](http://www.theros.org.uk)
- National Ankylosing Spondylitis Society: 0208 741 1515 [www.nass.co.uk](http://www.nass.co.uk)
- National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society: 0800 298 7650 [www.nras.org.uk](http://www.nras.org.uk)
- British Society of Rheumatology: 0800 2987650 [www.rheumatology.org.uk](http://www.rheumatology.org.uk)
- Lupus UK: 0170 873 1251 [www.lupusuk.org.uk](http://www.lupusuk.org.uk)
- Arthritis Action: 0203 781 7120 [www.arthritisaction.org.uk](http://www.arthritisaction.org.uk)
- Versus Arthritis: 0300 790 0400 [www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org)
- [www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public)
- [www.nhs.uk/conditions/arthritis/living-with](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/arthritis/living-with)

## Contact us

Rheumatology Telephone Advice Line: 0118 322 6574 (24/7 answerphone)

Clinical Admin Team (CAT 9): 0118 322 7969 [rbb-tr.CAT9@NHS.net](mailto:rbb-tr.CAT9@NHS.net)

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

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