

Information for patients with Inflammatory Arthritis

Arthritis is treatable and there is a lot of information to help and support you. However, it can be confusing to know where to look.

There is a lot about arthritis on the internet, some of it good, some of it not so reliable. A few good places to look are:

- **Versus Arthritis - www.versusarthritis.org**
You can look at information booklets online as a PDF or order a copy. There is advice about many conditions and also a helpline **0800 5200 520**
- **National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) – www.nras.org.uk.**
This site has real life stories, information booklets to read or order and a helpline **0800 298 7650** or email **helpline@nras.org.uk** Information is also available in languages such as Hindi or Urdu
- **The Psoriasis Association – www.psoriasis-association.org.uk**
- **Lupus UK – www.lupus.org.uk**
- **National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society (NASS) – www.nass.co.uk**
- **NHS website – www.nhs.uk/conditions/rheumatoid-arthritis**
- **NHSLiveWell – www.nhs.uk/live-well**
- **UHB Rheumatology website – www.uhb.nhs.uk/rheumatology**
- **Living well with pain – <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>**

Areas to check out on the websites:

What is arthritis?

If you want to understand more about your condition, there are videos that give an introduction on the Versus Arthritis website.

Drugs and blood tests

There are many possible arthritis and pain medicines. For the safe use of some medicines regular blood tests are needed. An explanation about these medicines and how they are taken can be found on the websites shown. More detailed information about medicines can be found on the medicines websites such as: **<https://bnf.nice.org.uk/drug/>** or **<https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc>**

Physical activity and relaxation

Getting the balance right between physical activity, rest and relaxation is very important. There are ideas on the Versus Arthritis, NRAS and Move It or Lose It website: <https://www.moveitorloseit.co.uk>. Exercise is very important for well being but it can be hard to find motivation or energy to carry on. Making the effort is often rewarding and can help with fatigue. A physiotherapist may be able to guide you if you are unsure how to manage particular problems.

Sleep

Good quality sleep is important. Find helpful information on the NRAS page 'Guide to getting a good night's sleep'.

Fatigue

Is very common and can be debilitating - find ideas to help you lessen fatigue on the Versus Arthritis website.

Relationships

Asking about relationships can be difficult. NRAS have a good booklet called 'Emotions, Relationships and Sexuality'. The Versus Arthritis website also has a 'Sex and Arthritis' booklet you can order or download.

Eating well

What should you eat or avoid? Versus Arthritis has a section called 'How can changing my diet help my arthritis?'. Also look at the British Dietetic Association website (BDA) – www.bda.uk.com/resource/rheumatoid-arthritis-diet

Looking after your joints

You can help to reduce pain and strain on your joints. Look at the booklet on the Versus Arthritis website and the NRAS 'Living with RA' section. There is also a useful tips section. If you are having problems with your hands or feet you can get further help from Occupational Therapy (hands) or Podiatry (feet). Please discuss this with a member of your rheumatology team and they can refer you.

Work and employment

Versus Arthritis and NRAS have information to help you deal with issues in the workplace, equipment and benefits. Find information for employers and employees including useful booklets you can order or download from NRAS.

MyHealth@QEHB – This gives you access to your letters, appointments and blood test results at QE. You will need to ask your doctor or specialist nurse to sign you up. You can find more information on the hospital website.

Flare of your arthritis

You may notice the following:

Your joints are swollen and painful, red and hot, much stiffer in the morning, you are feeling more tired and generally unwell.

What can you do?

- Use your pain medication as prescribed: this may mean a temporary increase and add NSAID's (Anti-inflammatories) if tolerated.
- Rest the joints but put them through a gentle range of movement.
- Cold treatment - use wrapped frozen peas or cool water.

Information for Patients

- Heat treatment - e.g. hot water bottle, heat pad - this can ease muscles if painful
- Let others know so they can help you
- Continue with your regular rheumatology medication as advised
- Check out Managing your symptoms – www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/managing-symptoms/

If the flare does not improve then contact your GP or Rheumatology team. HOT RED joints may need urgent attention.

For more information look at NRAS or Versus Arthritis websites

Contact details for the Rheumatology Department

If you have a question please have a look at the hospital rheumatology website first and see if this gives you an answer. www.uhb.nhs.uk/rheumatology

If you need additional help or information you can contact:

QE Nurses helpline: for medication side-effects, arthritis and flare related questions

Email: rheumatologynurses@uhb.nhs.uk

Phone: **0121 371 6827**

For blood results and changing nurse appointments:

Email: rheumatologynursesadmin@uhb.nhs.uk

Phone: **0121 371 7922**

To order further prescriptions email: Rheumatologyprescriptionrequest@uhb.nhs.uk

Please email two weeks before you run out of medication.

Understanding Methotrexate

The National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society has produced some useful information about the drug methotrexate which is used in rheumatology. It is used for rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis and other forms of inflammatory arthritis.

Go to this link or scan the QR code to watch a short video to help answer questions you might have before your next appointment.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ksil9wl2a7E>



Disclaimer: The link and QR code will take you to a video belonging to a third party. UHB has no responsibility for the content shown.

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email patientexperience@uhb.nhs.uk.