Early Arthritis Clinic
Patient Appointment Information

Patient Information Leaflet
If you require a translation or alternative format of this leaflet please call the Patient Advice & Liaison Service on 01296 316042
Rheumatology Out-Patient first Appointment
Important information about your appointment

Please ensure you bring your appointment letter with you and check in at the central out-patient’s desk where you will be directed to the waiting area for the Rheumatology Department.

Rheumatology Out-Patients services are held at:
Stoke Mandeville Hospital – Mandeville Wing
Amersham Hospital – Heberden Unit
Wycombe Hospital – Main Out-Patients

At Stoke Mandeville, the Rheumatology out-patients is in Mandeville Wing and you may need to go to the main hospital building for your blood tests and x-rays. At Amersham and Wycombe, these are all in the same building.

Please remember to allow plenty of time for your appointment and all of the necessary tests. This is very important so that you do not feel rushed and not worrying about issues such as car parking.

Information about parking at all Buckinghamshire Trust Hospitals can be found at: www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Please bring a list of all your current medication. You do NOT need to bring all your boxes/bottles of medicines.

As you will need to undress to be examined by the doctor please wear loose clothing with a few layers.

What can I expect at the first appointment?

Before seeing the doctor, you will have your blood pressure, weight and height recorded and asked to provide a urine specimen so that baseline routine investigations can be recorded.

While you are in the waiting room, we will ask you to fill in some questionnaires about your symptoms. These will help the doctor to assess how and where your symptoms are affecting you.
You will then be seen by either the Consultant or one of the junior doctors. If seen by one of the junior doctors they will discuss your care with one of the Consultant Rheumatologists.

You are very welcome to bring your partner/carer/family member into the consultation with you should you wish to do so.

**What happens when I see the doctor?**

As well as having your joints examined, you will have a general examination which may consist of listening to your heart or chest to fully assess you. The doctor will discuss your questionnaires with you to help with understanding your symptoms.

After your consultation with the doctor, it is very likely that you will require blood tests and x-rays to help with making any diagnosis.

It is also possible that you may have an ultrasound scan of any swollen joints at this clinic appointment. An ultrasound scan involves passing a probe over your swollen joints and is a very effective method of diagnosing inflammation of the joints and tendons.

Ultrasound scanning is currently only available in the clinics at Stoke Mandeville. If you are attending Amersham or Wycombe for your first appointment you may be required to attend a further appointment for a scan.

Other investigations specific to your individual needs may require a further appointment in other departments.

**What can I expect after my initial appointment?**

Results of tests and x-rays will be communicated to you either at your next appointment or via your GP if you are discharged back to their care.

If you are required to start on medication, you will be booked to see a Specialist Nurse within 2 weeks of your first appointment to discuss the proposed treatment and diagnosis.

If you are diagnosed with an inflammatory arthritis, you will be invited to attend a single education session which is considered to be part of your treatment. Details about this will be provided at your appointment.

Subsequent appointments will likely alternate between the Doctors and the Specialist Nurses.
It is important that you are fully involved in any decisions regarding your care, so please feel free to ask any questions at your appointment.

You may find it helpful to write down your questions before your appointment to act as a reminder. Alternatively you can telephone to discuss your care with the Rheumatology Specialist Nurses on the Rheumatology Helpline 01296 315960.

Please ask for this number at your appointment, but it is also available on the hospital website and at the end of this leaflet.

You may also be invited to participate in on-going research studies. This is entirely up to you if you wish to participate, but will have no impact on the care you receive should you wish to decline.

If you are unclear or unsure about the next stage of your care, please do contact the Helpline for clarification.

Rheumatology Appointments 01296 315941 – choose Option 6

Rheumatology Helpline 01296 315960

Please also see Rheumatology Patient Information on the Buckshealthcare website www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to or after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser. Staff will let you know if this is the case.