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.

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If you require a translation of this leaflet please call 01296 315 337.
WHAT IS THE RAPID ACCESS PATHWAY?
Rapid Access Pathway (RAP) is a service designed to see patients with stable Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) on a 2 yearly basis in a nurse led clinic, but with the facility to access an urgent appointment in the rheumatology clinic as soon as possible but guaranteed to be within 10 working days at any time during those 2 years. This system has been used successfully in other hospitals such as the Bristol Royal Infirmary and has resulted in both high patient and GP satisfaction whilst also improving access to clinic appointments.

WHY DO WE NEED A RAPID ACCESS PATHWAY?
Many patients with stable and well controlled RA attend clinics for routine appointments just to ensure they are monitored but with no obvious change or alternative suggestions in treatment. This may be time consuming and costly for the patient (time off work, car parking etc) and in effect means that patients are seen when stable rather than when symptoms are problematic. The pathway will free up clinic time for patients who have unstable disease and enable patients to be seen at short notice with arthritis ‘flares’.

WHICH PATIENTS WILL BE ASKED TO TAKE PART?
Stable RA patient means:
- Patients who have had a diagnosis of Rheumatoid Arthritis for more than 2 years
- Patients whose RA is well controlled without recent ‘flares’
- Patients who are on no more than 2 disease modifying medications
- Patients whose blood tests have remained stable

WHAT IF PATIENTS DO NOT WANT TO PARTICIPATE?
This pathway is a joint decision between the patient, the consultant and GP. If a patient does not wish to participate they can opt out of the pathway either before or during the 2 years.

HOW WILL IT WORK?
Patients who fulfil the criteria will be asked if they wish to participate.
If a patient wishes to take part, consent will be obtained and:
- The patient will attend an education session on the RAP (this is compulsory)
- Advice will be given on how to access the helpline for urgent appointments
- GP will be notified and care plan given to both patient and GP.
- Telephone appointment with the Specialist Nurse at 3-6 months to ensure that there are no issues with either their arthritis or medications
- A routine appointment will be given for 2 years in a nurse led clinic review

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY ARTHRITIS FLARES SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE MY 2 YEAR APPOINTMENT?
If several successive appointments are required, this would mean that a patient’s RA has become unstable and they would be taken off the RAP and attend more regular routine appointments.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE 3-6 MONTH TELEPHONE REVIEW?
- A booked telephone appointment will be made with the Specialist Nurse.
- 3 weeks prior to this you will receive a text or email reminder about the appointment and blood forms and questionnaires will be posted to you for completion before the appointment.
- The telephone appointment is designed to discuss your arthritis control with you, assess your blood tests and any problems you may be encountering with your medication. It may be felt necessary to refer you to other members of the multi-disciplinary team such as Occupational Therapy or Podiatry or book an earlier appointment in the medical clinic.
- If your Rheumatoid Arthritis remains stable, you will be seen as planned at the 2 year appointment (details overleaf).