

Dear Rheumatology Patient

As you will be aware the Government are working with Public Health England and the medical community to minimise the spread of Covid-19 caused by Coronavirus. As part of this we have been looking at how best to care for patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis, Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) and other conditions requiring immunosuppression.

- Information for the public is available on <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>. This is updated regularly, and we would suggest this is the most reliable source to keep you informed. Please follow all suggested advice to avoid infection.
- Other useful sources of information:
 - National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) www.nras.org.uk/news/coronavirus
 - Paediatric Rheumatology European Association (PREs) website has good COVID information for patients/families and professionals – <https://www.pres.eu/>
- Please continue taking your medication unless you have been specifically advised to stop by the rheumatology team.
- We would ask that if you develop symptoms of a dry cough, fever or shortness of breath, however mild, please follow this advice:
 - Stay at home and self-isolate your entire household for 14 days.
 - Avoid close contact with other people.
 - Do not go to a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital.
 - Use the online 111 coronavirus service to find out what to do next.
 - Only call 111 if you are unable to get help online.
- If your symptoms worsen during home isolation or are no better after 7 days contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For a medical emergency dial 999.
- **If you are asked to self-isolate due to contact with a known case or have travelled from a designated area, or you do contract the virus then please STOP your immunosuppressant medication and contact the Rheumatology Advice Line (01392 403502) so that we can make decisions about when to restart your immunosuppressive treatment.**
- **Please remember that steroids (prednisolone) must never be stopped suddenly, even if you become unwell.**
- We will be reviewing patients' immunosuppression, and may contact you with dose reductions if we feel this is clinically appropriate.
- As you have a lowered immune system, please follow advice about social distancing. There is a helpful document available at www.gov.uk.
- We will be conducting our clinic reviews by telephone. This will be on the same morning or afternoon as your scheduled clinic, although the time may vary slightly. We will still see patients face to face if either we or you feel there is a clinical need.

Yours sincerely,

The Rheumatology Team