

Patient Initiated Follow-up (PIFU) Rheumatology

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What is Patient Initiated Follow up (PIFU)?

Regular follow ups may not be necessary for some patients who are stable on treatment. Your time could be better utilised, until you feel you need to see your consultant or Specialist Nurse, for an assessment of your condition or changes to your treatment.

The patient initiated follow up (PIFU) service empowers you and puts you in control of your condition and follow up appointments.

When you feel you need to see your consultant or Specialist Nurse, for example when you are having a flare up of your condition, you will be able to contact the service directly to arrange for an appointment.

How might it affect you?

Some people feel relieved that they no longer need to be seen regularly in an outpatient (hospital) clinic and like the control that PIFU offers them over their health and wellbeing.

Some people may fear losing contact with the hospital. However, there is no risk of being 'lost' because everyone will be registered as an active patient of the service. The clinical team will be checking the blood tests of all people on our PIFU list once a year to ensure that they remain stable and contacting those people where we detect a problem.

Is this service suitable for everyone?

This service is suitable for patients whose condition is stable on treatment and who are compliant with their monitoring and treatment. Your suitability will be discussed with you in your consultation by your consultant or Specialist Nurse. This could also be discussed in video conferencing or telephone clinics. You can opt out if you wish.

When should I contact the service?

You should contact us via the telephone number at the end of this patient information leaflet if you feel that your condition has flared up and you need Rheumatology hospital input. For example, if you develop swelling and pain or are experiencing increasing stiffness in your joints.

Will I get an appointment when I need it?

Yes, we will see you as soon as we are able to. Your initial appointment will likely be a telephone consultation with a Specialist Nurse who will determine if a face-to-face outpatient appointment is required.

Will this be forever?

You will remain on a PIFU if your condition is stable and your clinician is happy for you to remain on PIFU.

If your condition is deemed to be stable and/or you are not on rheumatology medication, you will be placed onto a PIFU pathway for 6 months. When you reach the end of the 6-month pathway, you will be discharged to your GP.

If you are on rheumatology medications and did not contact the Rheumatology Department in your PIFU pathway timeframe, you will be contacted by Rheumatology at the end of your PIFU to see how you are getting on. If the clinician is happy to renew your PIFU period, you will enter another cycle of PIFU.

If your drugs are being prescribed by your GP, then your monitoring will remain with them, but the GP or the patient could make a contact should the need arise.

How do I contact the Department?

If you do have a problem related to your condition or medication, you can contact the helpline on the number below at any time.

Rheumatology nursing helpline (for all sites): 01522 573828

Please leave a message if there is no answer. We will aim to respond within 2 working days.

Please do not contact your consultant's medical secretary.

Please note calls to the helpline will be triaged by the Rheumatology Clinical Nurse Specialists. No clinical advice will be given during the call, this will happen during your appointment with the Rheumatology Clinical Nurse Specialist, should you require one.

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If you require this information in another language or alternative format, please email the Patient Information team at ulth.patient.information@nhs.net