



The Dudley Group
NHS Foundation Trust

Dudley Early Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) Clinic

Rheumatology Department
Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This information sheet is about the care and treatment for patients with new onset rheumatoid arthritis (RA). It explains the services available in the Early RA Clinic. It is written for people with RA but it may also be useful for their families or carers or for anyone with an interest in the condition.

What is the Dudley Early RA Clinic?

The aim of the Early RA clinic is to enable rapid control of RA and therefore prevent joint damage and improve physical functioning.

This clinic is run by a Consultant Rheumatologist and a Clinical Nurse Specialist. They will help manage and treat your arthritis for the first 12 months (approximately). You will be then be followed up by the rheumatology consultant whom you saw the first time you attended hospital.

If your RA is in the early stages, you should see a member of your healthcare team regularly to check how well your treatments are reducing your symptoms and improving your everyday life. The Dudley Early RA Clinic is specifically organised to allow this to happen. On arrival to the clinic, the outpatient nurse will initially assess the number of tender and swollen joints you have. At these appointments a Doctor will ask you questions about your arthritis, offer you a blood test (or look at your blood test results if you've already had one) and check your joints. Depending on the results of this assessment, they may suggest changing the dosages of your medication or trying different medications.

Once your symptoms are under control, the frequency of your hospital visits will decrease. If you need help and advice between appointments, you can contact the Rheumatology Helpline. The number for this is 01384 244789. This is an answering machine service and the clinical nurse specialist will aim to get back in touch the next working day.

Our team approach

The range of treatments developed over the years to manage RA is now considerable. Medication and surgery compliment the input from the therapy teams, ie physiotherapy, occupational therapy, podiatry, orthotics and health psychology. A referral will be made to these services on your behalf when necessary, and you can meet the team during the patient education programme.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapists offer advice and support to help improve your fitness. Your physiotherapist should teach you exercises to help make your joints more flexible and increase muscle strength. They should also give you information about other forms of pain relief (such as a type of electrotherapy known as transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation or TENS for short).

Occupational therapy

Occupational therapists offer advice and support if your RA affects your hands or is causing difficulties in everyday tasks. Occupational therapy helps you to carry out everyday tasks and activities on your own, at home and at work, by informing you how to look after your joints and through using equipment (such as a device that helps you unscrew jar lids). Occupational therapists can also help you to adjust to living with your condition by, for example, offering to show you relaxation and stress-management techniques.

Podiatry and Orthotics

Podiatrists offer advice and support if your RA affects your feet. You may be provided with orthotics (insoles) to help relieve your symptoms. Some patients experience difficulty in finding comfortable footwear; the orthotist and podiatrist work together and advice is given on the suitability of a full range of shoes. The Podiatry service is based at Brierley Hill Health and Social Care Centre.

Health psychology

Health psychologists work with people who have physical health problems like RA. We understand that living with a long-term condition like rheumatoid arthritis can be challenging. You may be referred to see a health psychologist if appropriate.

What about medication?

Early drug treatment of RA is important to minimise joint damage. There are several different types of medication available. Some control the disease itself, and some help to ease symptoms. Drugs used to treat the disease process are termed 'disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs' (DMARDs).

Education

At Dudley we have set up a RA Group Education Programme led by our health psychologist Ms Elizabeth Hale. If you wish, you will have an opportunity to attend these group meetings. They are designed to help consolidate your knowledge and experience of living with RA, hence this education programme is offered at approximately six months after attending the Early RA Clinic.

The education programme will include information on joint protection, relaxation, exercise, looking after your feet, eating healthily, medication, sleeping well, anxiety and depression, managing fatigue and pacing yourself and setting realistic goals. You will also have the opportunity to meet other people with rheumatoid arthritis who understand how you feel. As there is a lot to talk about, the group meets at the same time each week, for at least two weeks. Once you have attended the Early RA clinic you will automatically be sent the details of when the next group is meeting.

Further information

Versus Arthritis: <http://www.versusarthritis.org.uk>

National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS):

<http://www.nras.org.uk>

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

The Dudley Rheumatology Helpline: 01384 244789 (answer machine)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/rheumatology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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