



Dear patient,

Please read the 4 sections of this letter.

1. COVID19 (Coronavirus) is changing the way that Hospitals work.

DO NOT attend the Rheumatology Department or Blood Monitoring Appointment if you have symptoms of COVID19 or any other infection.

These symptoms are FEVER / HIGH TEMPERATURE or PERSISTENT COUGH.

If you have these symptoms you need to follow PUBLIC HEALTH ENGLAND advice.

If you are on hydroxychloroquine you can continue this drug. If you are on steroids (such as prednisolone) you must continue it.

If you are on other DMARD* or Biologic** drug treatment and you develop COVID19 symptoms STOP this until you are fully recovered.

If you are admitted to hospital please tell the medical team if you have been taking a DMARD or Biologic drug, steroids or NSAID (**Non Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs** such as naproxen, ibuprofen, etodolace etc).

* *DMARDs are **Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs** and include methotrexate, leflunomide, mycophenolate, azathioprine, sulfasalazine, ciclosporin, cyclophosphamide, baricitinib and tofacitinib*

** *Biologic drugs include Rituximab, etanercept, adalimumab, infliximab, golimumab, certolizumab, tocilizumab; abatacept; belimumab; anakinra; seukinumab; ixekizumab; ustekinumab*

2. Routine appointments with the Consultant or team member are suspended

DO NOT attend your usual appointment, unless advised to do so.

Your appointment will be re-arranged.

If you remain free of COVID19 symptoms please continue to take your usual treatment unless advised not to by a member of medical staff.

If your disease relapses or flares up then please contact 0191 223 1171 and we will give advice.

Continued

3. Blood monitoring appointments are continuing

If you take drugs* that require blood monitoring then please continue to attend these appointments providing you do not have COVID19.

These monitoring appointments are to ensure that the drug is safe for you to take.

We will also use these appointments to check that you have enough medication.

If you have any difficulty attending for you blood monitoring then please contact 0191 223 1171

4. Self-care

Further advice regarding social distancing and self-isolation are available from the Government. Please keep aware of news from reliable sources. Social media is not always reliable. Useful links are listed below.

We are expecting a high volume of phone calls and are increasing the number of people answering them, but please still call if you need to. The waiting time may however be longer than usual.

Many thanks,

Rheumatology team,
Freeman Hospital.

Public Health England Guidance

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Government Social Distancing Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-on-social-distancing-and-for-vulnerable-people/guidance-on-social-distancing-for-everyone-in-the-uk-and-protecting-older-people-and-vulnerable-adults>

NHS Advice on Coronavirus Self-treatment

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>