

# Rheumatology Patient Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)

PIFU direct tel: 01271 311571

Email: [rduh.rheumatology-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.rheumatology-northern@nhs.net)

## Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net).

## What is Patient-Initiated Follow-Up (PIFU)?

Patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU) puts you, the patient, in control of when you are seen by the rheumatology department. It means spending less time attending hospital appointments, but still having access to clinical support when you need it.

If your condition is stable, you may not find it helpful to attend regular outpatient appointments scheduled by the hospital. Sometimes, these appointments may not result in any change to your treatment, but you'll have spent time and energy putting arrangements in place to attend your appointment. Your condition may flare up in between regular booked appointments and it's at this point that you really do need our input. With PIFU, you can get advice from your clinical team, who may suggest an appointment is required.

You initiate the follow-up appointment, instead of the hospital. Which is why this process is called patient-initiated follow-up (PIFU).

For all other concerns, or if you are feeling unwell, your GP will remain your first point of contact.

## How will I know if I'm suitable for PIFU?

The rheumatology team will tell you if your condition is now suitable for PIFU, instead of regular appointments scheduled by the hospital.

It is entirely your decision. You can continue with regular appointments if you want to. Your clinician will have advised you about the PIFU process and given you this patient leaflet to support you.

## When should I call for a PIFU?

You should call if you experience a flare-up of your symptoms.

PIFU is not a replacement for urgent medical advice. If you require urgent medical advice, you should contact your GP, NHS 111, your local walk-in centre or, if you are really unwell, your local Emergency Department (A&E)

## How will I book a patient-initiated appointment?

This is a quick and easy process.

If you have a flare of your symptoms and need advice or an appointment, just follow the steps below and the team will help you.

### 5 easy steps:

1. Call or email the rheumatology team  
PIFU direct tel: **01271 311571** (9am-4pm)  
Email: [rduh.rheumatology-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.rheumatology-northern@nhs.net)  
If you need to leave a message when you call, please leave the following information:
  - Your full name and date of birth
  - Your hospital number and/or NHS number
  - A telephone number so we can call you back during our opening hours
2. Explain to the rheumatology team you are having a flare-up and need some clinical advice.
3. The team will review your concerns and decide whether you need immediate clinical advice for your symptoms or if you need an appointment.
4. If the team think you need an appointment, we will contact you to agree an appointment date and time. We will arrange an appointment for you within 10 working days.
5. Attend your clinic appointment.

## Will you still be looking after me if I'm on PIFU and don't initiate an appointment?

Yes, you will still have follow-up appointments with us. We will arrange a follow-up appointment after two years to check that your condition is still stable. If you are regularly seen in the biologic clinic, we will arrange a yearly review.

If you have any concerns associated with your condition, but not a flare up, you can contact the Rheumatology Advice Line on 01271 322359, Monday – Friday, 8.30am – 5.30pm (non-urgent calls only).

## What if I am worried and change my mind about this style of follow-up?

Just tell us and we will go back to booking regular hospital appointments for you. Our team are happy to discuss any concerns with you.

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### PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

### Have your say

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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