

Herts Valleys Integrated Musculoskeletal (MSK) Service

Community Rheumatology Service

A patient guide

Our service

Connect provide a large integrated MSK Service on behalf of the NHS across multiple locations in West Hertfordshire. We accept referrals from any hospital (providing your registered GP practice is within the Herts Valleys CCG catchment area), local GP's and other community services.

Connect Health's specialist services cover:

- Physiotherapy
- Hand Therapy
- Podiatry
- Orthopaedic (CATs)
- Pain Services
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome Services
- Rheumatology
- Postural Stability

What is Community Rheumatology?

The Community Rheumatology Service includes a multidisciplinary team of advanced therapy practitioners, GP's with specialist interest and Rheumatology consultants.

They can arrange X-rays, Blood investigations, MRI scans and Ultrasound scans to aid diagnosis.

Our rheumatology department provides services for patients with musculoskeletal diseases, pain syndromes and complex chronic inflammatory diseases, including:

- Diseases of the bone/Osteoporosis
- Non-inflammatory musculoskeletal pain
- Multiple joint pain
- Polymyalgia Rheumatica
- Stable diagnosed inflammatory and autoimmune disease
- Stable Ankylosing spondylosis
- Rheumatoid Arthritis

What to expect if I am being referred to Connect

Your referral will be sent to Connect electronically and registered on Connect's system within 2 working days.

Within a further 2 working days this referral will be reviewed by a member of Connect's specialist team to decide how quickly you should be offered an appointment, and by what medium.

On day 5 (or sooner) you should expect a phone call from Connect to make your appointment (the call may come from a withheld number):

- Urgent patients will be offered an appointment within 2 weeks
- Routine patients will be offered an appointment within 4 weeks

About appointments:

- A face to face appointment in the service at a location of your choosing. Please note: some locations have longer wait times than others, therefore some flexibility for initial appointments is required to ensure you are seen in a timely fashion
- Face to face consultation will be with an Advanced therapy practitioner in Rheumatology, or Consultant Rheumatologist or GP with special interest in Rheumatology to provide early diagnosis, advice and management

If we are unable to contact you successfully we will do one or more of the following:

- Leave you a voicemail if able
- Send you a text message requesting you contact us ("MSK Service")
- Send you a contact request letter

Future options

Following your initial appointment in the Rheumatology Connect service, you could follow a number of pathways to help with the management of your condition:

- Prescription of medications
- Soft tissue or joint injections
- Referral to in house physiotherapy clinic
- Referral to in house pain management clinic
- Educational seminars to help support you to understand more about your condition and how to manage it
- Transfer into one of Connect's other specialist services if appropriate
- Gym-based rehabilitation in a centre with more specialist equipment



If you would like to discuss your referral in more detail, please phone Connect on **01442 913356**



Further advice and guidance can be found online via **hertsvalleys.connecthealth.co.uk**