

FAQS FOR OFFICE POLICIES

How do I get an appointment? New appointments are made by physician referral only. Your referring health care provider will call for the appointment for you.

What do I need to bring for my appointment? Please bring your medications, your insurance cards and the completed patient information sheet we mailed to you when your appointment was scheduled.

Do I need a physician referral? Yes, we see patients on referral from a health care provider.

Can I e-mail the office? At this time, we cannot e-mail, but hope to have that capability soon.

Do you offer second opinions? Yes. We will be happy to evaluate you and your rheumatic disease to offer a second opinion.

What insurance plans do you accept? Insurance plans change, so feel free to call the office to see if we participate in your plan. We currently are part of United Health Care, Aetna, Cigna, Blue Cross-Blue Shield Plan P, and Medicare.

What is parking like? Parking is free and located right next to the office building. Handicapped spaces are available. There is a ramp for easier access in wheelchairs or walkers.

What is the payment policy? Co-pays are due at the time of the office visit.

How does the phone system work? Our phones are answered daily from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. A menu will help you direct your call when phoning the office. We have a pharmacy line to request refills of medications. If you are having a medical problem, the operator answering the telephone will send your message to a medical assistant who will return your call. The problem will be forwarded to the doctor who will recommend a solution to the problem.

What hospitals do you go to? We see patients at Fort Sanders Regional Hospital, Tennova and Children's Hospital.

FAQS FOR HEALTH CONCERNS

What do I do if I miss my dose of Methotrexate? Please call the office and your physician will recommend how to use the medication.

What do I do if I miss my dose of Humira, Cimzia, Enbrel, Simponi, or Orencia? Please call the office so your physician can help with timing of the missed dose.

How do I get a refill on my medications? Please call the office and choose the prescription refill line to leave your message about the needed medications. You may also contact your pharmacy.

How do I contact a doctor after the office is closed? A doctor is on call for the patients of Rheumatology Consultants at all times. Dial the office number first. The recording will give you the pager number for the doctor on call. Dial that number and punch in your phone number so the doctor can call you back.

Do I use heat or ice on my joints? It is best to use ice for the first 48 hours after an injury. However, if your arthritis is longstanding, you may prefer heat instead.

How do I get lab and x-ray results? Allow at least 48 hours for the test results to return. If the medical assistant does not call you with the results, phone the office and we will be happy to give them to you.

FAQS ABOUT RHEUMATOLOGY AND DISEASES WE TREAT

What is rheumatology? Rheumatology is the specialty that treats diseases of the joints, bones, tendons, ligaments and immune system. All of these diseases have joint pain. Examples include rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, gout, lupus, ankylosing spondylitis, scleroderma and Sjogren's syndrome.

What is a rheumatologist? A rheumatologist is a doctor who has trained five years after graduating from medical school to specialize in diseases of the joints, bones and muscles and immune system.

What is arthritis? Arthritis means swelling and pain in the joints. There are about 150 different types of arthritis. Each type is treated differently, making it important to be sure of the type you have. Establishing the type of arthritis is done by a rheumatologist by listening to your history and combining that with results from laboratory studies and x-rays.

What is osteoarthritis? Osteoarthritis is a disease where the cartilage breaks down from "wear and tear" on the joints (for example, in the knees) or where extra bone spurs grow (for example, in the spine and fingers). Osteoarthritis is usually treated by medications and injections in the early stages.

What are the latest medicines for rheumatoid arthritis? Rheumatoid arthritis is first treated with a group of medicines called DMARDs that modify and slow down the disease. These include Methotrexate, Sulfasalazine and Hydroxychloroquine. Newer biologic medicines are available that can be given by injection or infusion and include the TNF inhibitors, and drugs that interfere with T-cells and B-cells in the immune system.

What is lupus? Lupus is an autoimmune disease where the body's own immune system turns against itself. Proteins called antibodies are formed against a patient's own tissues. Sun sensitivity, hair loss, pleurisy, arthritis, and kidney disease can all occur in lupus. The disease varies from mild to severe.

What is psoriatic arthritis?

This is an aggressive inflammatory arthritis associated with the skin condition psoriasis. In most, but not all, cases, the psoriasis skin condition precedes the arthritis, sometimes by years. It is believed that less than 15% of patients with psoriasis have or will get psoriatic arthritis.

What is ankylosing spondylitis?

This is an arthritic condition associated with severe involvement of the spine, that is, the upper and lower back, and neck, with the inflammation often resulting in fusion of the vertebrae of the spine. Other joints, especially the hips, can also be involved. Organs other than the skeleton, such as eyes and bowels, can also be involved in the inflammation. It is often associated with a gene on the 6th chromosome called HLA-B27.

What is reactive arthritis?

This is a type of inflammatory arthritis that occurs resulting from an abnormal immune response of the body after an episode of infection, usually of the gut, urinary tract or venereal. This more commonly involves young adults. This may involve other body areas, such as eyes, urethra, cervix, bowel, and skin and nails. It can be associated with a gene on the 6th chromosome called HLA-B27.

What is tendonitis?

A tendon is the rope-like extension of muscle, linking it to neighboring bones, participating in the movement of joints. Tendonitis or tendonosis refers to injury and pain in the tendon through either inflammation – itis, or chronic degeneration – osis, often from overuse.

What is bursitis?

Bursitis is inflammation or degeneration of one of the sac-like structures (bursa) that are around bony prominences to protect the tendons of the soft tissues moving around them. Examples would be subacromial (shoulder) bursitis or trochanteric (hip) bursitis.

What is carpal tunnel syndrome?

This refers to the condition where a nerve in the wrist (the median nerve) is compressed, resulting in tingling, numbness and pain in the fingers and weakness in the grip. This can be brought on by overuse or injury to the wrist, or swelling in the wrist from arthritis or a multitude of other conditions.

What is inflammatory arthritis?

Though all arthritis is associated with some inflammation in the joints, inflammatory arthritis refers to those rheumatic conditions where the inflammation is more aggressive. This is often mediated by abnormalities in the immune system, but other causes, such as bacterial infection or crystal deposits in the joint, can also result in inflammatory arthritis.

What is gout?

This is a very inflammatory type of arthritis that characteristically comes in episodes in one or more joints, brought on by the chemical uric acid crystallizing in the joints, resulting in severe inflammation and pain and joint damage. It is usually associated with high levels of the uric acid in the blood and body tissues. Uric acid accumulates either because the body either makes too much or doesn't eliminate it fast enough.

What is scleroderma?

This is an autoimmune disorder characterized by thickened, tight, "sclerotic" skin. It can be localized to just the skin in confined areas of the body, or it can be more generalized and systemic, involving the skin more extensively, and also involving other organ systems (systemic), such as lungs, heart, esophagus, gut, joints, and blood vessels (Raynaud's).

What is Raynaud's?

This is a condition where the fingers or toes can blanch white or turn blue/purple, with associated pain or numbness. This is caused by constriction or narrowing of the blood vessels in these areas, usually in response to cold exposure, sometimes stress or other factors. This condition may occur by itself or associated as part of other rheumatic conditions, especially scleroderma. Cold, smoking and certain medicines aggravate this condition.

What is osteoporosis?

This is a condition not of the joints, but of the bones where the bone mass or bone mineral diminishes to such a level that there becomes a significant increased risk for fractures. Loss of bone mass is a natural part of aging, but is accelerated after menopause and by inactivity, thin body habitus, certain drugs and medical conditions. Loss of bone mass which is less severe, but may progress to osteoporosis, is called “osteopenia”.