



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Occupational therapy – rheumatology

Issued by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

## **What is occupational therapy?**

As part of the rheumatology service you may be referred to occupational therapy. Occupational therapists (also referred to as OTs) are skilled health and social care professionals who form part of the rheumatology interdisciplinary team working with you. Occupational therapists promote your independence in daily life and can help you to keep doing the things you want and need to do.

## **What can we help with?**

Our aim is to promote your independence in everyday life - in daily routines and activities of daily living. We can offer assessment, treatment and encouragement to help you achieve your goals. This could include support with:

- Improving your hand function.
- Advice on managing your condition.
- Work or employment issues.
- Advice on fatigue, sleep hygiene or pain management.
- Bathing, washing and dressing.
- Splinting provision – this could be off-the-shelf or custom-made products.
- Transfers (for example on/off the bed, in/out of the bath).
- Home adaptations.
- Identifying useful assistive gadgets and equipment.

## **What can I expect from my appointment with occupational therapy?**

If you are having problems with your daily activities you can request a referral to occupational therapy from any of the rheumatology team members, e.g. your nurse or consultant. At the first appointment we work together with you to identify the things you want to do and think of ways to help you achieve your goals and live as you want to. Sometimes it is helpful if you make a note of anything that is concerning you and bring this with you to the appointment.

Hand function is often an area of worry for people and we can provide advice on how to reduce strain on your joints and maintain your function. We might also suggest you try hand exercises, supports or splints, depending on your needs and priorities.

We will most often see you in a hospital clinic but might visit you at work or home depending on your individual needs. We might also suggest attendance at a group to aid self-management. This would only ever be with your consent and a treatment plan and goals will be jointly agreed at your first appointment.

### **What if I don't feel I need an appointment right now?**

It is always good to see you early but if you do not feel you need to see us now then please tell us – we can always see you at a later date and your appointment time could be valuable for someone else.

We know people's needs can change so we have an open referral system. This means you can contact us directly at any point to self-refer for an assessment if you have already been seen by our service. Cases are prioritised depending on identified need.

### **How to contact us**

The rheumatology occupational therapy service covers the whole of Northumberland and North Tyneside and runs clinics across the region, including at North Tyneside Hospital, Wansbeck General Hospital, Hexham General Hospital, Alnwick Infirmary and Berwick Infirmary. You can contact us Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 5pm.

**North Tyneside Hospital**  
**Wansbeck General Hospital**  
**Hexham General Hospital**

**0191 293 4318**  
**01670 529449**  
**01434 655632**

As we work across many sites we may not always answer the telephone immediately. There is an answer machine at each office and we will return your call as soon as we are able.

## **Alternative Formats**

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **03 44 811 8118**

## **Other sources of information**

### **NHS 111**

### **NHS Choices**

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### **NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)**

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### **Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust**

General Enquiries **03 44 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

PIN 908/V1

Review date: June 2022

© This material is the copyright of the Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust