



RHEUMATOLOGY CARE CENTER

PATIENT HANDBOOK

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OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
8:00am-5:00pm.

Phones open 8:30am-4:00pm,
except 12:00-1:00pm lunch

- Patients are seen Monday through Friday in our office.
- Every effort will be made to accommodate work-ins immediately but may take 1-2 weeks depending on the schedule. We will do our best to accommodate your schedule and address your concerns quickly.

SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS

New Patients

New patients interested in evaluation by a Rheumatologist should first be evaluated by their primary care physician to determine if they need this particular specialist's attention. Many forms of arthritis are managed well by an Internist, Family Physician, Orthopedist, or Rehab Physician. Referral from your physician with supporting documents will help expedite scheduling your appointment. If you are transferring from another rheumatologist, these records may be provided in lieu of another physician's referral and will be used to triage your appointment.

- New patient forms are under our "FORMS" tab on our home page. Your visit will be more efficient if you complete these ahead of time.
- Please arrive 30 minutes early if you have not completed your forms ahead of your visit.
- Bring your valid picture ID, insurance and pharmacy cards, and your copay/deductible.
- Bring your relevant imaging reports, labs, or previous medical records.
- Be sure your referral required by your insurance has been received prior to your appointment day.

Return Patients

Please call our office at 205-444-4858 or send us a message through the patient portal.

Bring a current copy of your medications or your bottles for review by the nurse along with your copay/deductible/prior balance.

NO SHOW POLICY

All NEW and RETURN patients will be charged for missed appointments. The fee for NEW patient NO SHOWS is \$100.00. The fee for RETURN patient NO SHOWS is \$25.00. Payment for missed appointment charges will be due before you can be rescheduled.

Multiple missed visits are grounds for dismissal from the clinic.

We want to help you keep your appointments. Appointment reminder calls will be provided 1-2 days prior to your appointment, all web-enabled patients will receive e-mail reminder 7 and 2 days before appointments and you receive a reminder of your appointment on your clinical summary at checkout. Even though we make every attempt to reach patients, it is the responsibility of the patient to records the date and time of their appointments. Please arrive on time for your appointment. If you are unable to make this appointment, please call at least 24 hours in advance to reschedule.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Determine your specialist co-pay on your insurance plan ahead of time and be prepared to pay that amount at the time of your visit. If annual deductibles have not been met, please be prepared to pay applicable charges.

Payments can be in the form of cash, personal check or credit card. We accept Debit Cards, Visa, Mastercard and Discover.

Payment is expected at the time service is rendered. Your insurance company requires you to pay your co-pay at the time of service. The cost of billing services continues

to raise the practice expenses. In order that we may keep our fees as low as possible, we are trying to eliminate billing after your visit. An account which is past due and for which no payment arrangements have been made will be forwarded to a collection agency. Collection agency fees will be the responsibility of the patient.

There is a \$35 charge for all returned checks. Patients which are dishonored will be required to pay future amount due with cash, money orders, or debit/credit card.

PRESCRIPTIONS

All medications are sent electronically through the electronic health record to the preferred pharmacy indicated on your New Patient Forms. If you require use of a mail order pharmacy, be sure to remind the nurse and physician of this preference so it will also be added to your local pharmacy. We make every effort to provide 90 day supplies to adherent patients for optimal convenience and compliance. Be sure all of your requested refills are sent before you leave your appointment to reduce any delay in your medications between visits.

Refills

If you find you will not have enough medication to make it to your next appointment, you can send a refill request through the patient portal or call our office and leave a message for the nurse. Please confirm pharmacy information and a phone number where you can be reached should we have questions. Refill requests will be handled daily but you should allow 3 days advance notice to account for office and pharmacy processing. If we are unable to honor your request, you will be notified by phone along with the reason your request has been denied. Common reasons refill requests will be denied include: 1) the medication is a controlled substance (see Pain Agreement), 2) you have either missed appointments or missed lab visits, 3) the medication is prescribed by another physician, or 4) there is a safety concern. Please do not call requesting new medications between visits or medications not reviewed by the physician at your previous appointments. Many medications require periodic clinical and laboratory monitoring. Patients must be seen at the physician's recommended intervals and at least yearly.

Controlled Substances

Controlled substance medications, including all narcotics, follow unique prescribing guidelines. They must be dispensed for 30 days at a time and require strict adherence to pain agreements. There will be no refills in between visits, after hours, or after missed appointments. There will be no refills for excessive use, lost or stolen prescriptions, or acute pain or health changes in between your clinic visits. You should obtain controlled substances and narcotics from a single provider. Obtaining controlled prescriptions from multiple providers is prohibited. Your prescription must be provided at your regularly scheduled appointment. Random drug testing and/or pill counts are standard practice and required for all patients. Database screens are also conducted to ensure medications are filled correctly with your pharmacy and with a single provider. Be sure you bring controlled medication bottles and remaining pills to all of your appointments.

LABS

Labs are obtained at your clinic visits but may be checked at either Quest or LabCorp in between visits, depending on patient convenience. Please be sure to note lab location if you require labs in between visits.

You will be reminded of your lab-only appointments one day prior to your visit. All orders are sent electronically to the lab so you do not have to obtain any paperwork prior to your lab appointment. You may arrive for your lab draw at any time that day for your convenience. Again, please note your lab location with the front office so lab orders are sent to the correct location if you do not obtain them onsite in our building.

Lab results are generally discussed at the follow up appointments. Nonurgent lab discussions about complex rheumatologic lab results occur with the physician at your scheduled appointment. We provide

brief phone call updates between visits for reassurance. If you would like to obtain a copy of your results by fax or need another physician to receive a copy, please remind us when we call.

Do not hesitate to call with specific questions about your surveillance and safety lab checks.

In the event your lab orders are missing, call the office immediately, so we can fix this problem and minimize your inconvenience.

If you are notified of abnormal lab work from another physician that may impact your rheumatologic management, please notify the nurse and Rheumatologist and have those results faxed for the physician's review.

IMAGING

We report your imaging results by phone and are happy to share your results by fax, as well, for your personal records. Please indicate when we call if you need the results faxed.

Results of any other tests or imaging ordered by another physician will need to be relayed and explained by the ordering physician.

MEDICAL RECORDS

We follow state guidelines for reproduction of medical records which allow us to charge a retrieval fee of \$5, \$1 per page for the first 25 pages, then \$.25 per page thereafter, and the actual cost of postage if they are being mailed.

Forms and physician letters will be billed according to complexity. Fees usually range from \$15-\$30.

Your medical records may be shared with any physician you indicate on the appropriate paperwork at your clinic visit, with any physician that has referred you to us, or with any physician we refer you to.

If you require copies of your medical records, we must receive your request in writing before we can release them. Electronic transfer of records is available without any charges. Paper copies of your records will be charged at a standard fee per page as listed above.

CONTACT

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