



# Guidance on the management of drugs requiring monitoring during COVID-19

Adapted from information published on SPS website

## Azathioprine, leflunomide, mercaptopurine, and methotrexate drug monitoring in primary care during COVID-19

The following advice is for the management of patients taking DMARDs for rheumatology related conditions. General guidance on management of rheumatology patients during COVID-19 is available from the [British Society for Rheumatology](#).

This document gives advice on drug monitoring in primary care during COVID-19 for the following drugs when used as DMARDs **in stable patients** (*stable patients are defined as those who have been on current treatment for >12 months and at a stable dose for >6 weeks*):

**For non-stable patients the standard monitoring requirements apply as per the current shared care guidelines available on the [SWYAPC website](#)**

**During the COVID-19 pandemic, recommendations to reduce attendances are:**

- Where DMARD use has been successful and stable (*see definition of stable above*) consider extending the monitoring interval to up to every 6 months
- However, extending blood monitoring is **not suitable** if the patient has:
  - poor renal function with CKD  $\geq 3$
  - severe liver disturbance or abnormal liver results due to DMARDs within previous 3 months
  - severe abnormal WBC results due to DMARDs within previous 3 months

**For patients with symptoms of COVID-19, recommendations are:**

- Consider stopping medication (*see "Should patients cease their medication as a precaution?" advice from [BSR](#)*) and seek specialist advice on when to re-start
- Undertake additional blood tests after self-isolation and within two weeks of re-starting medication
- If results okay—revert to monitoring every 6 months; if abnormal—seek specialist advice
- Refer patients to advice from [Versus Arthritis](#)

*This page was developed in conjunction with Kalveer Flora, Chair, Rheumatology Pharmacists UK (RPUK); Lead Pharmacist, Specialised Rheumatology CRG for NHS England. We are hugely grateful for her input*