

ST. JAMES'S HOSPITAL LABMED DIRECTORATE			
Edition No.:	01	Form	Doc No: LF-IMM-0262
Authorised By	Nora Purcell	Date: 15.08.2019	Date of Issue: 15.08.2019

Frequently Asked Questions in the Clinical Immunology Department

Clinical Department Staff

- The Clinical Immunology service is led by Dr. Niall Conlon assisted by Dr. David Edgar
- The Immunology nursing team are Anne Sloan, Aoife McKeever, Patricia McCrea and Ann Barron
- The service is supported by the Clinical Immunology Specialist Registrar Dr. Fionnuala Cox, Registrar Dr. Catherine King and International Clinical Fellow Dr. Eman Al Fares
- This is a teaching service and you may be seen by any member of the team. Not all patients see the consultant, but all cases are discussed with a consultant on the day of clinic. Requests to see a specific doctor can be accommodated but may result in delays

How do I get referred?

- You must send a referral letter from your GP or another health care professional. This should detail the reason for referral and any examination or assessments that have been carried out previously. If you have attended other services for the referral issue then we ask that your GP includes relevant reports with your referral.
- Self-referrals are not accepted
- This service does not review children (<16)

What services are provided?

We provide specialist services in the following areas:

- Primary Immunodeficiency
- Complex Secondary Immunodeficiency
- Vasculitis – particularly small vessel vasculitis
- Chronic spontaneous urticaria and angioedema
- Anaphylaxis and other serious allergic reactions
- Drug allergy – (please review information for referring doctors)
- Complex autoimmune disease
- Desensitisation treatment (allergic rhinitis – grass and house dust mite only)
- Venom desensitisation

We also provide an in-patient consult service and, as a pathology specialty, have roles in the INAB accredited Diagnostic Immunology Laboratory service including result validation, communication and quality control.

Primary Immunodeficiency and Vasculitis are the priority clinical areas of this Department. Recent years have seen huge increases in referrals for allergic disease. We continue to advocate for resources to meet this area of overwhelming demand.

ST. JAMES'S HOSPITAL LABMED DIRECTORATE			
Edition No.:	01	Form	Doc No: LF-IMM-0262
Authorised By	Nora Purcell	Date: 15.08.2019	Date of Issue: 15.08.2019

Frequently Asked Questions in the Clinical Immunology Department

The Immunology Department is actively involved in research and education and regularly collaborates in research published in international peer reviewed journals.

What are the waiting times?

- The wait for a routine clinical immunology appointment may be up to 24 months.
- Urgent referrals are seen more quickly. GPs, and other referring health care professionals, are welcome to advocate changes in referral triage on behalf of patients by contacting the department directly. If you feel you should be seen more quickly you should discuss this with the referring doctor who can then contact the medical team to provide further details
- The waiting time for routine drug allergy assessment can be more than 24 months

Why are waiting times so long?

- Waiting times for Immunology clinic appointments are very long. This is an on-going problem. The single most important factor is that there are not enough clinical immunology doctors available to provide the increasing breadth of service required for an increasing number of patients. The large increases in referrals for allergic diseases are largely responsible for very long waiting times. Unfortunately, at present there are very few specialists in allergic disease in Ireland. We believe that this is a major unmet need across the health service
- We are continuing to engage with St. James's Hospital management, Dublin Midlands Hospital Group and the HSE to secure the resources required to improve waiting times and improve our performance.
- Immunology Departments are operating in Beaumont and Galway Hospitals. Please note clinical immunology services are not available in St. Vincent's Hospital, Mater Hospital, Cork University Hospital or Limerick University Hospital or other regional hospitals.

Is there a private immunology clinic in St. James's Hospital?

- There is not a private immunology clinic available in St. James's Hospital.

What are the clinic times?

- General Immunology Clinic – Monday am
- Diagnostic challenge testing – Monday am
- Chronic urticaria / vasculitis clinic – Thursday pm
- Immunology Day Ward – Monday-Thursday
- Allergy day ward – Friday am
- Lupus clinic – Tuesdays monthly (with Department of Rheumatology)
- Specialist Clinics in Vasculitis and Serious Primary Immune Deficiency are being developed in 2019

ST. JAMES'S HOSPITAL LABMED DIRECTORATE			
Edition No.:	01	Form	Doc No: LF-IMM-0262
Authorised By	Nora Purcell	Date: 15.08.2019	Date of Issue: 15.08.2019

Frequently Asked Questions in the Clinical Immunology Department

What services are NOT available?

- **Contact allergy** – refer to Dermatology. Immunology does not have access to patch testing
- **Eczema** – in general, patients with eczema should be seen by a dermatologist unless there is specific evidence of associated serious food allergy. Please note that whilst food allergy is associated with eczema, eczema in adults is not caused by food allergy.
- **Food intolerance / Irritable bowel syndrome** – there are no evidence based diagnostic laboratory tests for food intolerance. Patients with non-allergic gut symptoms (bloating, excessive flatulence, diarrhoea) may benefit from assessment for coeliac disease, or in certain cases testing for lactose intolerance (provided by gastroenterology). Assessment by a specialist gut doctor (gastroenterologist) may be helpful rule to out other stomach conditions. Food intolerance is best managed by dietary manipulation under the supervision of an experienced dietician.

We do not recommend the use of non-evidence based tests or management strategies such as food specific IgG, Vega testing, kinesiology, enzyme potentiated desensitisation or naturopathy. The use of such tests in allergic disorders may be dangerous.

- **Non-allergic rhinosinusitis** – whilst we do offer desensitisation for patients with allergic nasal disease, if there is no evidence of allergic sensitisation on testing then there is no role for Immunology services. Most cases of allergic rhinitis should be managed in primary care.
- **Lyme disease / Chronic Lyme disease** – referrals should be directed to an appropriate infectious disease specialist.
- **Chronic fatigue syndrome / ME and related disorders** – the Immunology Department is currently unable to offer services to manage chronic fatigue syndrome. We do not offer experimental immune system treatments. We advise, in line with NICE (UK) guidelines, that patients with CFS/ME, should engage in a supervised graded exercise program with supporting cognitive behavioural therapy. Unfortunately this approach is not available in the Immunology Department or locally in St. James's Hospital at this time.

Non-attendance at out-patient clinics (Did not attend/DNA policy)

- We understand that many people are waiting for long periods on their Immunology appointments and that this is frustrating.
- Between 10 and 25% of patients (2015-2017) do not attend their scheduled appointment and these appointment slots are wasted. This is unfortunate for people waiting on much needed appointment.
- In most cases, patients that do not attend their appointment will not be offered a further appointment with us. The referring doctor or GP will be informed.
- We do recognise that circumstances change – if you no longer want or need an appointment please cancel it by contacting the immunology secretary on 014162928.

ST. JAMES'S HOSPITAL LABMED DIRECTORATE			
Edition No.:	01	Form	Doc No: LF-IMM-0262
Authorised By	Nora Purcell	Date: 15.08.2019	Date of Issue: 15.08.2019

Frequently Asked Questions in the Clinical Immunology Department

Complaints and compliments

- We understand that at times our service does not live up to the standards expected by either ourselves or our patients. Should you have any observations about our service they should be directed to the St. James's Patient Experience Office
- Email: patientfeedback@stjames.ie
- Telephone 014284248 / 014103361

THIS DOCUMENT IS UNCONTROLLED WHEN PRINTED