

Table 3**Commonly used DMARDs in older patients**

DMARD	Dose	Time until effect	Side effects	Cautions and contraindications	Monitoring
Methotrexate	7.5-25 mg/week orally, IM or SC	6-12 weeks	Dyspepsia, stomatitis, cough, diarrhoea, anorexia, alopecia, bleeding or bruising, fever, pneumonitis, increased nodulosis	Bone marrow suppression, hepatic and pulmonary disease, alcoholism, immunodeficiency, active infection, pregnancy, concomitant trimethoprim	FBC, LFTs fortnightly. Once stable dose, 4-8 weekly
Sulfasalazine	2-3 g/day orally in 2-3 divided doses	2-3 months	GI upset, diarrhoea, dizziness, headache, rash including photosensitivity, anorexia, abnormal liver function, neutropaenia	Allergy to sulfa drugs, renal or hepatic disease, blood dyscrasias	Monthly FBC, LFTs until stable dose then 3 monthly
Hydroxychloroquine	200-400mg/day orally (<7 mg/kg body weight)	2-3 months	Diarrhoea, anorexia, alopecia, nausea, rash, retinopathy, neuromyopathy	Allergy to antimalarials, retinal abnormality, G6PD deficiency, pregnancy	Yearly optometrist review of vision