

YOUR GUIDE TO ADMISSION





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Our world has changed. We have too.

In the face of extraordinary challenge, healthcare has been transformed, but our dedication to safe, high quality care has remained the same.

When you visit us, you will notice we have put new measures in place to support this.

From extra infection prevention measures, to the layout of our hospitals with social distancing in mind, everything we do has been reviewed to make sure we are providing the safest places for your care.

These measures are guided by both national and international best practice. To find out more about our safety measures, please visit hcahealthcare.co.uk.

As the situation with COVID-19 continues to change and develop, so too will the measures we have in place, so that we can continue to do what we have always set out to do - deliver exceptional care in the safest possible environment.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Included in this guide is detailed information about what to expect before surgery, during your admission and recovery once you leave hospital.

At the back, we have prepared a checklist for you to add key information that will help make your healthcare journey as smooth as possible.

Household isolation guidance

To minimise your risk of becoming infected with COVID-19, we will require you to follow strict isolation guidelines. We understand how difficult this period may be for you, your family and others you may live with. The measures below are very stringent and based on recommendations by the Royal College of Surgeons to keep you safe and to reduce all possible risk of you contracting COVID-19 during these extraordinary times.

Your consultant or pre-assessment nurse will discuss with you how long your isolation period will need to be, which may include a period of isolation following your operation too.

DURING YOUR ISOLATION PERIOD, PLEASE DO NOT:

- Leave your house
- Attend any gatherings
- Have any visitors, except essential caregivers
- Have contact with anyone displaying COVID-19 symptoms
- Touch your eyes, nose, throat and mouth with unwashed hands

PLEASE ASK ALL MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD TO:

- Stand two metres apart wherever possible
- Spend minimal time in shared spaces
- Keep shared spaces well ventilated
- Cook and eat separately from others
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in your home
- Where possible, sleep separately
- Clean the bathroom after each use

Please also take extra care when having food and medicines delivered to your home.

ATTENDING HOSPITAL APPOINTMENTS DURING ISOLATION

If you have an essential hospital appointment during this time, please travel by private car. Keep the car well ventilated, and travel on your own or with a member of your household if necessary. Please do not use public transport.



If any of your household develop COVID-19 symptoms, please contact your consultant immediately.

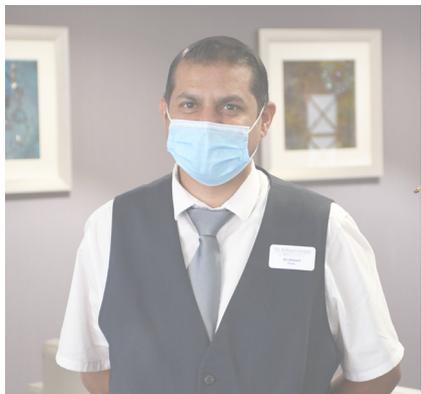
Pre-operative assessment appointment

We arrange for most patients to have a pre-operative assessment before we carry out your procedure. This is to check your suitability for general anaesthetic and/or sedation, and to assess any pre-existing health conditions you may have.

The pre-assessment clinics are run by specialist nurses, who are supported by our anaesthetic department.

BEFORE YOUR ASSESSMENT

Before your appointment you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire to provide information about your general health and medical history. Please note down any questions that you would like to ask the pre-assessment nurse about your procedure, and have a list of all of your regular medication and any recent hospital letters to hand for the assessment.



YOUR ASSESSMENT

A member of our nursing team will then arrange to call you to discuss this with you. They will also explain your procedure in more detail, including how long you can expect to be in hospital for.

Prior to your procedure, you may need to come into hospital for further assessments such as blood tests, an electrocardiogram (ECG) or MRSA screening. This may be as a separate appointment ahead of your admission, or we may ask you to extend your admission by coming into hospital ahead of your surgery date for these tests to take place.

If you do need to come into hospital for pre-assessment before your surgery, please continue to adhere to the household isolation guidance on page 5 throughout this time.

COVID-19 screening

As part of our dedication to providing high quality care in the safest possible environment, you are required to have a negative COVID-19 test before your procedure.

Your pre-assessment nurse will advise you on how you will receive your swab test. This will involve a simple nose or throat swab which may be slightly uncomfortable, but should not be painful.

YOUR COVID-19 TEST RESULT

If your COVID-19 test is negative, we will continue with your procedure as planned. However if you are found to have an active COVID-19 infection, we will have to postpone your procedure until you are symptom-free. Your pre-assessment nurse will explain this in more detail to you.

We only contact patients following their swab test in the event that their result is positive. If you don't hear from us, please assume that your procedure is going ahead as planned.

YOUR
SAFETY
COMES
FIRST

Before your procedure

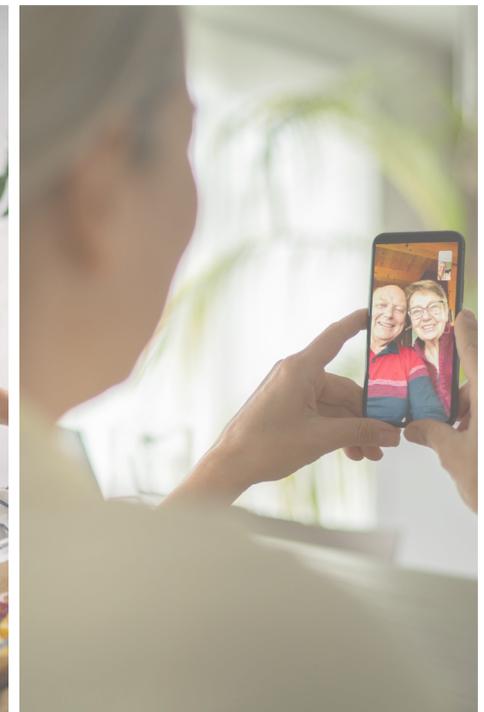
It is important to ensure you are well prepared for your procedure physically, mentally and practically. Prior to your operation, you may want to think about:

- Keeping fit by exercising indoors
- Eating a well-balanced diet
- Stopping smoking and drinking alcohol.

You can find advice and support to help you stop smoking by visiting www.nhs.uk

You should also:

- Inform your GP you are coming into hospital
- Arrange for someone to pick you up from hospital in a private car
- If you live alone, arrange for someone who has also been isolating to stay with you for 24 hours after you have been discharged. If this will not be possible, please discuss this with your pre-assessment nursing team
- Arrange for food and medicine to be delivered to your household
- Arrange to take time off work, school or college after the procedure
- Discuss with your consultant whether you and your household should isolate after your procedure
- If applicable, arrange for dependents and pets to be cared for during your stay



Coming into hospital



PERSONAL HYGIENE

To help protect you from developing an infection after surgery, please follow these personal hygiene instructions before coming into hospital:

- Have a shower or bath the night before and on the morning of your procedure.
- If you were told by your pre-assessment nurse to use antiseptic wipes, after drying with a clean towel please use the wipes on your neck, chest, arms, legs, perineum, buttocks (do not use internally) and back, if reachable. Use four wipes the night before and four wipes the morning

of your procedure. Let your body air dry – your body will feel sticky for a few minutes as the wipes take effect.

- If you are having foot surgery, please use the additional wipes on both feet on the morning of your operation.

For women of child-bearing age, exposure to anaesthetic can be harmful to an unborn child. To be certain that you are not pregnant before your procedure, please abstain from sexual intercourse or use a reliable form of contraception (not condoms alone) for the time between your last period and your operation date.

MAKING YOUR STAY AS COMFORTABLE AS POSSIBLE

Before you arrive, please let us know if we need to be aware of any special requirements. These could include use of a wheelchair, interpretation services, or any restrictions in your diet which may not be accommodated for on our menus.

We can also ensure that, if required, important information regarding your care is available in alternative formats including audio, braille and large font.

FASTING INSTRUCTIONS

Please follow the fasting guidelines that your consultant or nurse will provide you before you arrive at the hospital.

For most people this will involve stopping all food, milk-based and carbonated drinks six hours prior to your procedure. You should stop all fluids two hours before. Do not drink alcohol the night before, or smoke 12 hours before your procedure.

TAKING REGULAR MEDICATION

Please confirm with your nurse whether or not you should continue taking your prescribed medication. Tablets are not considered to be food, and if instructed you should take them as normal.

PREPARING FOR YOUR PROCEDURE

Before you arrive, please remove any nail varnish, make up, body piercings and any other jewellery aside from a wedding band, if you have one.

Please leave valuables, large amounts of money and large or bulky suitcases at home.

WHAT TO BRING

Please make sure you bring comfortable loose-fitting clothes, well-fitting slippers or shoes with non-slip soles, toiletries and glasses, dentures and walking/hearing aids if required.

You will also need to bring any medicines you are taking, including inhalers, your steroid card and warfarin book (if you have these). Please also have the name and contact details for your escort and next of kin to hand.

Although we have phones and televisions in every patient bedroom, you may wish to bring a phone and charger with you. Wi-Fi is available and free of charge throughout the hospital.



On arrival

When you arrive at the hospital, please check in at reception. Tell the receptionist if any of your personal details (e.g. your address, contact details, GP or next of kin) have changed and they will be happy to update your file.

ON THE DAY OF YOUR PROCEDURE

A nurse will introduce themselves when you arrive on the ward, and will advise how long you can expect to wait before going to the operating theatre. They will also take your blood pressure, pulse rate and temperature.

Your consultant will visit you and talk to you about your procedure, and ask you to sign a consent form giving your permission for the procedure to go ahead. They may also mark your skin with a pen to highlight the operation site.

Your anaesthetist will explain the medicines they intend to use to put you to sleep, and what pain relief they will give you after your procedure.

Following your operation

After your procedure you will wake up in the recovery area of the operating theatres. A recovery nurse will check your vital signs regularly, including your blood pressure, and take care of you until you are able to be moved to your room.

If you experience any pain or side effects from the anaesthetic, such as feeling sick, dizzy or disorientated, or if you have a sore throat or dry mouth, our nurses will be on hand and can give you medication to relieve these symptoms.

Once on the ward your nurse will confirm if you are able to have something to eat and drink.

Try to follow these simple steps to help you readjust after your operation and keep you safe:

- Take slow deep breaths if you can – this helps prevent chest infections after surgery.
- If you are able to, do some gentle leg exercises such as rotating and flexing your feet.

We are doing everything we can to minimise the risk of infection throughout our hospitals and clinics. However, if you develop COVID-19 symptoms during your stay, you may be required to have a repeat COVID-19 swab test.

VISITING POLICY

We are no longer permitting any visitors to enter the hospital, except in extenuating circumstances.

However, we offer a complimentary **'virtual' visitors service** for all of our inpatients. We will organise a secure video call with your loved ones on your behalf and deliver an iPad to your room, set up before your 'virtual' visit so that you do not need to worry about logging in.

Dial **'0'** from your hospital phone, or email contact@hcahealthcare.co.uk to arrange your virtual visit ahead of your admission, or once you arrive into hospital. Please have your next of kin's contact details to hand.

HOSPITAL SUPPORT SERVICES FOR INPATIENTS

We have a wide range of holistic wellbeing services to optimise your recovery, led by specialists in their fields across all of our hospitals. These include:

- **Nutrition and dietetics:** if needed, our dietitians are available to help optimise your nutritional health and wellbeing for your recovery after surgery.
- **Inpatient physiotherapy:** we provide a post-surgery physiotherapy service, designed to aid the recovery of patients with respiratory or mobility problems.
- **Speech and language therapy:** our speech and language therapists provide assessment and management for patients with communication, voice and swallowing problems.
- **Complementary therapies:** includes holistic therapies such as reiki, massage, aromatherapy and reflexology to work alongside your existing medical treatment and care.
- **Multi-faith chaplaincy and spiritual care service:** whether you are religious or not, our multi-faith team of chaplains provide a 24-hour daily service to support you during your stay.
- **Occupational therapy:** our occupational therapists will help you to develop, maintain or regain the ability to carry out everyday and more taxing tasks.



WHAT YOU WILL BE GIVEN ON YOUR DEPARTURE

- **Discharge summary letter:** this is a letter giving details of your hospital treatment and the medicines you need. A copy will also be sent to your GP. Keep it safe and show it to those involved in your care.
- **Medicines:** if necessary, we will provide a supply of medicines for up to 14 days. The pharmacist or nurses on the ward will explain any instructions that you need to follow. Further prescriptions should be obtained from your GP.
- **Equipment:** you may be given equipment such as walking aids to take and use at home. Someone may need to take these home for you separately.
- **Supplies:** a short-term supply of things you will need at home will be provided, for example stoma or catheter bags, dressings, syringes and needles. Further supplies should be obtained from your GP or pharmacy.

PATIENTS WITH HEALTH INSURANCE

Please be aware that the consumable items listed may not be included in your health insurance policy, and you may be charged separately for these. We recommend that you discuss whether these items are included in your policy with your insurer prior to your admission.

SHARING YOUR FEEDBACK

When you leave hospital, we'll ask you to complete a feedback form. We really want to hear about your experience so that we can continually improve our service and the care that we deliver. We appreciate all comments and feedback that we receive.

Arriving home

THE FIRST 24 HOURS

For the first 24 hours after leaving hospital, do not:

- Drive, operate machinery, use a cooker, ride a bicycle, sign a legal document or engage in any activity requiring skill or judgement
- Take sleeping tablets
- Drink alcohol

ISOLATING AFTER YOUR OPERATION

Dependent on the type of surgery you have had, we may ask you and your household to isolate for a period after your surgery.

Please read our [Household isolation guidance](#) on [page 5](#) for more information.

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please contact the hospital ward's telephone number on your discharge notes, or your consultant for advice:

- Any COVID-19 related symptoms
- Increased pain or swelling
- A temperature above 37.8 degrees Celsius
- Bleeding in the area you had surgery
- Difficulty passing urine

In the unlikely event of an emergency, please visit your nearest emergency department and remember to take your discharge letter with you.



