

Information for patients undergoing surgical procedures involving anaesthesia during the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19 restrictions are changing in the community but there's no change in our hospitals.

We are committed to your safety and supporting you to make the right decisions about your care in the light of the additional risks created by COVID-19.

This leaflet includes details about the potential impact of COVID-19 on your forthcoming operation but, please remember that a member of our team is always happy to answer questions you may have about your care.

Your surgeon and the hospital team

Your surgeon will discuss the possible outcomes of the operation with you and, if appropriate your family or carers, before reaching a shared decision with you. This discussion will:



cover the benefits of having the operation, and the effects on your health and wellbeing of postponing or not having it



ensure that you understand the risks associated with COVID-19 during the operation and that you have given your informed consent



include alternative options if you wish to decline or postpone your operation

It is important that you feel well informed about the benefits and risks involved in your operation, including those that can be caused by COVID-19 before you give your consent.

Your surgeon may also wish to discuss the impact of the prevalence of COVID-19 in your local area.
You can access information about this here:

Risks associated with COVID-19



Whilst the impact of COVID-19 on surgery is not yet fully understood, there is evidence that some patients undergoing surgery while they are infected with COVID-19 are at risk of developing serious complications or death during the period after surgery.

There are a number of individual factors which are associated with the increased risk of becoming severely ill if you undergo an operation whilst having a COVID-19 infection. These factors include:

- older age (65 or older)
- being male
- people from a black, Asian or other minority ethnic group
- underlying health conditions such as obesity, diabetes or high blood pressure
- being clinically extremely vulnerable.

There are some operations which carry greater risk if the person undergoing the operation is infected with COVID-19. These include:

- cancer surgery
- major surgery
- emergency surgery

Your surgeon will consider your risk profile and advise you of the risks and benefits of the various options which are clinically suitable for you as well as the steps that you should take if you are at higher risk.

Optimising your health and wellbeing before your operation

Patients who are able to improve their health and activity levels are therefore fitter and recover from surgery more quickly. Your clinical team will advise you of some of the steps that you should take to optimise your health and wellbeing before your operation.

These may include:

- taking regular exercise
- doing strengthening and balance exercises
- improving your mental wellbeing
- reducing your alcohol consumption
- stopping smoking
- controlling any existing conditions

You can access further information on improving your health before your operation here:

<https://www.cpoc.org.uk/patients>

Preparation for your operation

In order to protect you from COVID-19 infection and prevent spread of the virus it is important that you:

- minimise contact with others, follow comprehensive 2 metre social distancing and rigorous hand hygiene for 14 days before your operation.
- have a COVID-19 test a maximum of 72 hours before your operation
- observe strict self-isolation, alone or with friends or family, between the time of your test and your operation.

If you are at greater risk of getting COVID-19 or at risk of a poorer outcome if you were to get COVID-19, your Consultant will advise you to self-isolate up to 14 days before your operation.

On the day before your admission we will call you to ask you whether you have symptoms of COVID-19. We will also ask you whether you have symptoms of COVID-19 and check your temperature on your arrival at our site. Before your operation we will ask you to confirm you have adhered to the guidance on social distancing and your individual self-isolation requirement.



Transport

If possible, you should use private transport to get to and from the hospital. Your Consultant or members of the healthcare team will advise you on whether you will be able to drive following your operation or whether you should arrange that a family member or friend pick you up. If you are not able to arrange private transport you should follow UK government advice on using public transport.

Protecting you during your stay in hospital



Face masks

To help keep you and others safe, please arrive at hospital wearing a medical mask; if you forget or do not have one, we will supply you with one. If you prefer to wear your own face covering, then we will ask you to put one of our medical masks over the top of it. If you are unable to wear a face mask, please let our staff know and they will advise you on the most appropriate measures.



Hand sanitiser

On arrival you will see hand sanitiser that you will be asked to use, and you will also be asked to complete a screening questionnaire so we can assess any risk of COVID-19.



Temperature check

You will also need to have your temperature taken. Once these steps are complete and the screening indicates it is safe to continue with your procedure you can continue with your admission.



Concerns

If there are any concerns, we will discuss these with you in a private area and agree the best way forward for your safety.



Consultations

Whether you are having a discussion about a procedure or having your initial pre-operative assessment, this consultation may take place face-to face, by phone or video call.



Restricting visitors to our hospital

Minimising the number of people entering our hospitals will help us reduce the spread of COVID-19, keeping our patients and staff safe. We are continually reviewing the visiting policy in our sites so please ask us to clarify our position when attending for any procedure or appointment.

If you need to be accompanied by a carer this will be allowed, but we ask that this is limited to one person and we also ask that you inform us that this is essential before you attend your appointment.

In order to protect you and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our hospitals we have put in place a number of further safety measures. These include:



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and social distancing

Each of our hospitals has made careful arrangements to ensure social distancing is maintained. As you enter the hospital you'll be asked to follow the local arrangements, such as floor markings, to ensure the appropriate social distancing gap between individuals is maintained.

During your stay with us you will also see staff wearing the appropriate PPE including gloves, aprons, masks and eye protection. This is for both your, and their, protection.



Hygiene

Hand hygiene is critical both within the hospital and at home. During your stay in hospital you should wash your hands with soap and water frequently, or use the hand sanitiser provided, to help prevent infection. This is particularly important before eating, after using the toilet and after sneezing or coughing into your hands or a tissue.

Our staff are dedicated to upholding high standards of hand hygiene and you will see them clean their hands regularly in line with guidelines.

Try to avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth at all times as this is how COVID-19 can spread.



Enhanced cleaning

Our housekeeping teams are working tirelessly to ensure that our hospitals are as clean as possible and it is likely you will see them cleaning during your stay. If you have any concerns about cleanliness please raise them; our staff are keen to ensure you are completely confident that they are providing the highest possible levels of care and cleanliness.

We would always rather know if you have any concerns so we can address them or provide reassurance.

You can access these safety measures along with a range of further patient guides here:
<https://www.bmihealthcare.co.uk/coronavirus-advice/keeping-you-safe>

Having a procedure after receiving COVID vaccination



We recommend a delay in at least one week between a COVID-19 vaccination and general anaesthetic, unless your surgery is deemed urgent. There is some rationale for separating the date of surgery from vaccination by a week so that any symptoms such as fever might be correctly attributed to the consequences of either vaccination or the operation itself. Further information can be found on the Royal College of Surgeons website.

<https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/coronavirus/vaccinated-patients-guidance/>

This means that you will still need to self-isolate and be swabbed for COVID-19 72 hours before your surgery, in line with the guidance provided by your clinical team.

Additionally, your procedure may need to be rescheduled to allow appropriate time to elapse in between your surgery and the COVID vaccine. Please discuss with your Consultant to identify the most appropriate timeframes.

Postponing your operation

We are likely to postpone your operation if:

- your test result is not available or you test positive for COVID-19
- you have symptoms of COVID-19
- are not well enough for your operation
- you have had contact with someone with COVID-19, for example as identified through the NHS Test and Trace system.

If your operation is postponed you should speak to your specialist team as soon as possible about rescheduling it. Depending on the reasons of your procedure being postponed we may have to delay it up to 7 weeks.

Discharge arrangements



Your Consultant and members of the ward team will discuss your discharge and follow up arrangements with you including advice about what you should do if you develop symptoms of infection, including COVID-19 symptoms, within three weeks of your operation.

Supporting you after your procedure



Recovery and discharge

After your procedure, you will be able to recover in your own private, single room.

The length of time you spend in the hospital will depend on the complexity of your procedure and the speed of your recovery. For some procedures, it's possible you'll be able to leave the hospital on the same day.

Before you leave the hospital it's important that you talk to your nursing team about what help you may need after your discharge.



Returning home and rehabilitation

When you are discharged from hospital, you will normally return to your home. We'll provide a contact number for the hospital and we'd urge you to call if you need advice or have any concerns. You will be asked to inform us if you develop any symptoms, or have a positive COVID test within 14 days of leaving hospital.

If you need to spend time in rehabilitation or need services such as physiotherapy, the same infection prevention measures outlined above will be used in these facilities.

To support your recovery it's important that you follow the instructions in the discharge letter we'll give you and remain in contact with your GP, who will be aware of any ongoing care or nursing you might need at home.



Follow-up appointments

Before you leave the hospital, we will give you details of any follow-up appointments and care you need. Unless further treatment is needed (e.g. chemotherapy), or there are complications after your procedure, follow-up appointments will usually take place face-to-face, via video call, or over the phone, to reduce the risk associated with COVID-19.

NHS Test and Trace



Circle Health Group is supporting NHS Test and Trace in their work to control COVID-19. The results of all COVID-19 swabs are reported to Public Health England (PHE), if positive, then, PHE would inform Test and Trace accordingly for follow up. This is under the Public Health Control of disease act 1984 and the Health and Protection Notification regulations 2010 which require the statutory reporting of COVID-19 results in the interest of public health.

It is not necessary to seek consent from each person for this processing. The processing of your information in this manner is covered by the UK General Data Protection Regulations Article 6 (1) (c) – a legal requirement which we are subject to.

<https://www.bmihealthcare.co.uk/privacy-notices/covid-19-data-protection-statement>