

# Working to keep patients safe during the coronavirus pandemic

Throughout the UK's response to the coronavirus pandemic we've been working hard to make sure our patients stay safe and are updated about their postponed care. Although our hospitals have recently been dedicated to caring for those with the most urgent medical and surgical needs we're now able to reintroduce planned, non-urgent procedures for both NHS and private patients.

We'd like to share with you the measures we've put in place to ensure you're fully informed and reassured before your procedure as well as supported when you're back at home. We want you to be confident that we're doing everything possible to keep you safe and provide the highest level of care.

## Providing reassurance about scheduling your procedure

The first step for you will be a telephone or video consultation with your Consultant who will discuss with you the benefits and risks of surgery as part of your shared decision-making, before going ahead with your procedure. This will include consideration of any risk to you from delaying treatment. If you are in a high-risk group for contracting COVID-19, or if you have serious underlying medical conditions, it may be suggested that your procedure is deferred until later, when it would be safer for you.

## Reducing the risks associated with COVID-19

Our patients' safety and wellbeing is always our priority and as a result of COVID-19 we're putting in place more enhanced precautions, safety measures and steps. So, while it's not possible to entirely eliminate the risk of catching COVID-19 we're taking every possible measure to minimise your risk of infection.



### 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 BMI 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.

## Helping you to prepare for your procedure

If you have concerns about the timing of your procedure, it's important that you express your concerns to your Consultant. You might want to ask about:

- the benefits and risks of the procedure
- the risks of catching COVID-19
- your risk from any pre-existing medical conditions
- the possible side effects of the proposed procedure
- alternative options for treatment, including non-surgical care or no treatment
- advice on your lifestyle patterns that may reduce your risk of complications after surgery or may change the progress of your condition
- any further treatment after the procedure that will be required (e.g. physiotherapy) and how you will access it.



### VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS

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

This helps to limit the number of people coming to hospitals while COVID-19 is still present in the community.

We're only asking patients to visit the hospital if it's absolutely necessary, for instance if they need an urgent scan, blood test or other examinations.



### COVID-19 SCREENING

Before you are admitted to hospital, you will be asked to undergo a period of self-isolation at home and your Consultant or a member of the pre-admission team will talk to you about how long this should be. Anyone who lives with you will need to self-isolate for the same period unless it's absolutely not possible. If this is the case, we'll share with you advice on how they can help keep you safe, such as minimising the time that they spend with you, avoiding using the kitchen when you are there, keeping separate their own crockery and cutlery, having their meals in a separate room where possible and using separate towels and, if possible, a separate bathroom.

Two to three days before you are due to come into hospital for your procedure you'll need to have a COVID-19 swab test and we'll ask you about symptoms of COVID-19 such as high temperature, continuous cough, shortness of breath or loss of taste or smell.

If you are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, your procedure will only go ahead if it is urgent, based on the severity of your condition and only with your consent. This is to minimise the risk of complications. Even though the diagnosis of COVID-19 may cause a further delay to your procedure, this may still be a safer option.

## Providing guidance on minimising the risks of your procedure

There are steps you can take yourself to prepare for a procedure and minimise the risk of complications from it, by improving your health and adopting a healthier lifestyle. This can improve the outcomes of your procedure and reduce your recovery time.

## What to Expect On Arrival at the BMI Hospital or Clinic



### FACE MASKS

To help keep you and others safe, please arrive at hospital wearing a face mask or covering; if you forget or do not have one we will supply you with one.



### HAND SANITISER

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



### TEMPERATURE CHECK

The final step is a temperature check. Once these steps are complete and the screening indicates it is safe to continue with your procedure you will be shown to your room.



### 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 and wellbeing.

## Keeping you safe when you are in our hospitals



### ■ PPE

When you are in hospital, you may be asked to wear a mask or another type of PPE and clinical staff will be wearing some kind of PPE, too. Depending on the area in the hospital, this could be a mask, eye protection or a plastic apron. This may mean that the faces of those caring for you will be covered. Please don't let this stop you communicating with staff as you normally would. If you find it difficult to hear or understand what is being said through the PPE, please make staff aware, so that they take this into account and provide alternative ways of communicating with you.



### ■ Being dropped off and collected, and staying in touch with family and friends

Someone you live with will need to drop you off at the hospital on the day of your procedure. To minimise exposure during the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors are not allowed into the hospital except in exceptional circumstances. This means that they will not be able to accompany you into the hospital. Similarly, when you are ready to go home, they can collect you but will not be able to come inside of the hospital. A member of the BMI team will advise you on a time of discharge so you can make arrangements to be collected and will support you to make these arrangements.

We know it's important for you to stay in touch with your family and friends while you're in hospital so we encourage our patients to use phone and video calls to communicate with them during their hospital stay. Before going to hospital, consider how you will communicate with your family and friends and make sure you have the equipment to do this and you know how to use it. Don't forget your charger!

There may be times when you're asked to refrain from using a mobile phone, and we'd ask that you talk to your nurse and follow their guidance on this.

## 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.

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 via video call, or over the phone, to reduce the risk associated with COVID-19.

## Here to help

Our team is here to help you – before, during and after your stay at a BMI hospital. We're always happy to listen to any concerns you may have, provide guidance and information you require and support your wellbeing.

## More resources for patients undergoing a procedure