

Coming into hospital for consultations, intervention and treatment

You have been given this leaflet because you are booked in for a consultation, procedure or surgery. We know that this can be a worrying time. We hope that the information in this leaflet will help to reassure you that we have put in place measures to keep you, and the staff who will be looking after you, safe while you are in the hospital/clinic.

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that we have had to adapt how we deliver healthcare, to keep all our patients and staff safe. This includes how and where we provide care to patients, what you will need to do before coming in to the hospital/clinic, and what you can expect when you arrive.

It is important that you read this leaflet in full and if you are unsure of anything or have any questions, please ring the phone number on your hospital/clinic letter.



What is my risk of getting COVID-19 while in the hospital/clinic?

It is currently not possible to entirely eliminate the risk of catching COVID-19 while you are in the hospital/clinic. However, we are taking every possible measure to ensure our hospitals and clinics remain completely COVID free and to minimise your risk of infection. This includes:

- screening all patients and staff
- using personal protective equipment
- additional training for all staff on how to limit the spread of the infections
- handwashing/sanitising stations
- social distancing
- regular cleaning
- testing patients for COVID-19 (where applicable)
- single rooms or cubicles for patients
- regular COVID-19 testing amongst our staff
- ensuring that our staff have had the COVID-19 vaccine.

There is an increased risk of complications should you have an operation while COVID positive. This is a risk that your surgical team will consider very carefully and discuss with you before recommending that any planned operation goes ahead.



How should I prepare for my operation?

Talk to your clinician or doctor

If you have concerns about the timing of your operation, you should discuss these with your surgeon. 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 operation
- 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 operation that will be required (e.g. physiotherapy) and how you will access it.



Virtual consultations

We have introduced virtual appointments for patients to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. This means that some interactions with our team might take place online or by telephone, rather than face to face. We will let you know if any of your appointments or pre-operative assessment will take place virtually.



Before you come in to the hospital or clinic

Before you are admitted to the hospital or clinic we will ask you to take some precautions to reduce any risks of COVID-19. These are explained in more detail below:

- If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 OR if you live in an area that is subject to local lockdown restrictions, please do not come to the hospital or clinic for any consultation, treatment or procedure. Please telephone us as soon as possible and speak to a member of staff.
- If you have had COVID it is recommended that there is a gap of seven weeks before you have your operation. Please tell either your Consultant or the hospital if you have had COVID recently or you develop COVID before you are admitted.
- Prior to admission we will ask you to take part in a health screening questionnaire to identify any symptoms of COVID-19. If you are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, we will reschedule your procedure, for your own safety. Currently only life-saving or urgent surgery should take place, in patients with either confirmed or suspected COVID.
- There must be a minimum of 14 days between your booster vaccination and your date of surgery. If you have recently had your booster, please make sure to tell your consultant.
- We will ask you to undertake comprehensive social distancing and strict hand hygiene for the 14 days before you come into hospital.
- If you are having a general anaesthetic or sedation we will ask you to come to the hospital 72 hours before your procedure to have a swab taken for COVID-19. You will need to self-isolate at home for the next three days until you are admitted to the hospital.
- Your consultant will advise you on steps you can take yourself to prepare for surgery and minimise the risk of complications from your operation. These can improve the outcomes of your operation and reduce your recovery time.

What will happen when I am in the hospital/clinic for my procedure?

Your safety is our number one priority and so we have put in place some new measures to protect the health of our patients and staff and to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We would like to share with you what to expect when you come into our facilities for treatment.



Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

When you are here, please wear a face mask or other type of personal protective equipment (PPE). If you do not have a face mask we will be able to give you one. If you have difficulty wearing a mask or face covering for medical reasons please do contact us and let us know prior to your arrival.

You will notice that our staff are still wearing personal protective equipment, too (unless exempt). The type of PPE our staff wear might change depending on which department you are in. You might see some of our staff wearing a mask, a visor or goggles, a plastic apron or full coveralls. This could mean that the faces of those treating you will be covered. Please do not let this stop you communicating with our staff as you normally would. If you find it difficult to hear or understand what is being said please tell our staff as soon as possible.

Social distancing and queuing

Please arrive at the time of your appointment or admission and not earlier, to reduce the total amount of time you need to spend in the hospital/clinic. Unfortunately we can only admit you at the time of your appointment.

You will notice that we are working very hard to maintain social distancing wherever possible. Our team will help direct you safely to where you need to be. You might notice signage and markings to help with guiding you safely around our facilities and showing you where to safely stand, sit or wait. Please help us to help you, by following the directions in place. If you are unsure of where you should be, our staff will be happy to help you.



Visitors

In order to reduce the number of people in our hospital/clinics at any one time and minimise the risk of infection, we are not allowing visitors. We ask that you come alone to all appointments, unless of course you need the assistance of a carer, or if you are bringing a child in for an appointment.

In exceptional circumstances, visitors who are allowed into the hospital/clinic premises will be asked to wear personal protective equipment. We encourage patients to use phone and video calls to communicate with friends and relatives during their hospital/clinic stay. Before going to the hospital/clinic, 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. You should follow the local advice of your hospital/clinic at all times.



Hand hygiene

Maintaining good hand hygiene is essential to reduce the transmission of infection in health care settings. When you enter, we will be asking you to use hand sanitiser or hand wash. Please also ensure that you practice good hand hygiene by regularly washing your hands.



Respiratory hygiene

While you are here, you can help minimise potential COVID-19 transmission through practising good respiratory hygiene measures. Use a disposable, single-use tissue to cover your nose and mouth when sneezing, coughing and wiping or blowing your nose. Used tissues should be disposed of promptly in the nearest waste bin. Please remember to wash or sanitize your hands after coughing, blowing your nose and disposing of any tissues, and to keep your hands away from your eyes, mouth and nose.



Single rooms or cubicles

Any patient using our day care facilities will be socially distanced and placed in single or socially distanced cubicles to minimise opportunities for close contact. All patients coming in for an overnight stay will be placed in a single room.



Additional cleaning

Our facilities are cleaned professionally in line with government guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All patient rooms and equipment are cleaned throughout each day and in-between patients.

What will happen after my treatment or operation?

Recovery and discharge after my operation

After your operation, you will be able to recover in a private room or socially distanced cubicle.

The length of time you spend in the hospital/clinic will depend on the complexity of your operation and the speed of your recovery. For some operations, when there are no complications, you will be able to leave on the same day. You should discuss with your surgical team what help you may need upon leaving.



Follow up and discharge after my treatment

When you are discharged, you will normally return to your home. You should have a contact number from your clinical team where you can seek advice if you 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. You should make sure that you follow the instructions in your discharge letter 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, you should try to find out your options for any follow-up appointments and post-operative visits that you may need. Unless further treatment is needed (e.g. chemotherapy), or there are complications after your operation, follow-up appointments may take place via video, or over the phone, to reduce the risk of infection. You can speak with your GP in the same way.

Frequently asked questions

Is it safe to come to the hospital/clinic while I am shielding?

If you are currently shielding, you may attend your hospital/clinic appointments, but please follow the instructions in this leaflet carefully. Please let the department you are visiting know you are shielding. We advise you let them know at your phone assessment and when you arrive at the hospital/clinic.

Are visitors allowed with me?

In order to minimise the number of patients in the hospital or clinic at any one time, we are asking that all patients please come alone. We recognise of course that there are some cases that will be exempt, for example, patients who need the assistance of a carer, parents bringing a child in for treatment and/or patients coming in for end of life care. We ask in these circumstances that you please inform our Director of Nursing prior to coming in so we can best prepare for your arrival.

Will the hospital/clinic be busy?

We are asking patients to follow social distancing when in our facilities and managing the number of patients in our facilities at any one time.

Will the hospital/clinic be cleaned regularly?

All our hospital/clinic areas, including those for appointments are cleaned on a daily basis and in between patients.

Do you need to social distance in the hospital/clinic?

Yes - please follow social distancing rules when you walk through the hospital or clinic.

Latest Government Advice on COVID

You can find the latest Government advice on COVID by using the links below:

England

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Please note that this advice is subject to change and you should check the website regularly to stay up-to-date with the latest advice.

What does self-isolating mean?

Self-isolating means that you must stay at home and do not have contact with anyone outside your home and as little contact as possible with the rest of your household for the full period of self-isolation.

If you live with others there are some practical steps to take:

- Stay physically apart as much as possible. Sleep in separate rooms and use different bathrooms if you can.
- We do recognise that many patients are not able to do this.
- Minimise the amount of time you spend in shared spaces such as the kitchen. Trying to stay at least two metres (three steps) apart.
- Clean household surfaces such as kitchen counters regularly using disinfectant. Wash your hands regularly, for 20 seconds each time.
- Make sure to sneeze or cough into tissues, your elbow, or your sleeve, and throw away the tissues straight after using them.
- Don't use the same towels or crockery as other people, and make sure everything has been washed thoroughly before it's used by someone else.
- Do not leave your home for any reason - if you need food or medication order it online or by phone or ask someone to deliver it to your home.
- Do not have visitors to your home - including friends and family, except people who give you essential care. Do any exercise at home - you can use your garden if you have one.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, throat and mouth with unwashed hands.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for choosing Aspen Healthcare and for following these new health measures which are designed to keep you safe