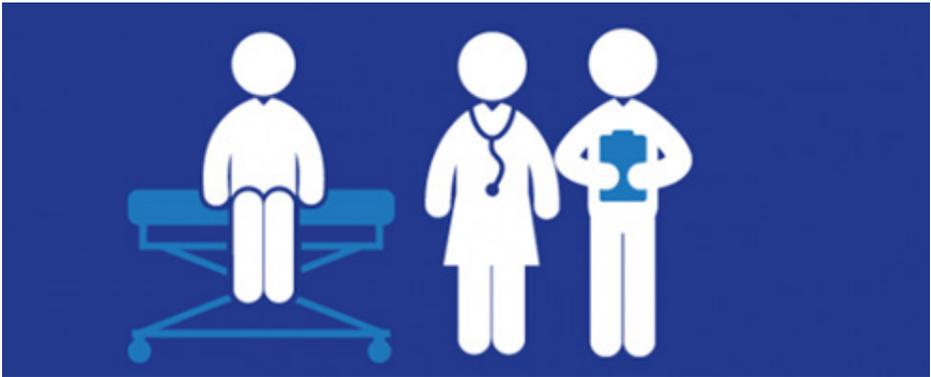


Elective Surgery - What Do I Need To Know During the COVID-19 Pandemic?



Prior to attending hospital, please call the department BEFORE arriving if you, or a member of your household, are experiencing any of the following:

- a new continuous cough
- a high temperature (37.8 degrees centigrade or higher)
- a loss of smell and/or taste
- or have been tested positive for COVID-19,

Even if you, or a member of your household, have been recently tested for Covid-19 and had a negative result, you must inform the department if new symptoms occur since testing.

For the rest of the household, if someone has serious symptoms and cannot manage at home, they should use NHS111 online (you should only phone 111 if you cannot get online).

Further advice about symptom management and self-isolation can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT?

Whilst we are doing everything we can to maintain surgery. Your assessment and care may be disrupted, delayed or performed differently during the pandemic. This could lead to appointments and treatment being delayed, suddenly cancelled or results taking longer than expected. Please be patient if this happens to you.

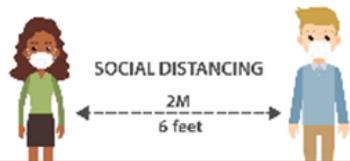
When you attend hospital you will notice that it is much less busy than usual. This is because many outpatient appointments are being done by telephone or video-calling.

There are also no visitors allowed.

The staff caring for you will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Depending on what your surgery is, the staff may wear different types of PPE. Please be assured that the PPE being used is appropriate for the type of procedure you are attending for.

Social distancing will be maintained where appropriate, and we ask for your co-operation with this. However, in order to give you your treatment, undertake a procedure or prepare you for surgery, staff will not always be able to maintain social distancing from you, or each other, at all times.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE!



The departments you attend may be in different locations than on your previous visits, or you may even be asked to visit a different hospital (sometimes a private provider). If getting to and from a different hospital will be difficult for you, please call well in advance of your appointment date and ask for help with this.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Surgery is an essential part of your treatment but any type of operation involves some degree of risk, and your surgeon will always discuss the risks, and potential benefits, of surgery with you as part of the consent process. Our priority is always to ensure that we operate on patients in the safest possible way to minimise risk and maximise benefits.

At the current time, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, your healthcare team are having to consider the additional risk to you if you were to catch COVID-19 just before your operation, during your hospital stay or when you are recovering at home in the days and weeks after surgery. The risk of you catching COVID-19 during this time needs to be considered alongside the risks of you not getting the treatment you need.

If you are infected with COVID-19 just before your operation or in the immediate post-operative period, you are likely to become more unwell than you would do normally. This could mean you spend longer than expected in hospital, possibly in the intensive care unit receiving breathing assistance, and you could suffer long term complications. It is important to understand, there is a higher risk/greater risk of death for patients who become extremely unwell with COVID-19 in the days or weeks after surgery.

Some surgical procedures carry greater risks than others, For example, operations involving long anaesthetic, major operations on your tummy or surgery which involves spending time in the intensive care unit post operatively.

In two small studies in China, where the virus started, patients who underwent surgery and contracted COVID-19 had a higher chance of having severe symptoms, needing to be admitted to ITU for ventilation and a higher risk of death than in the general population. This risk was higher for those people having a major operation.

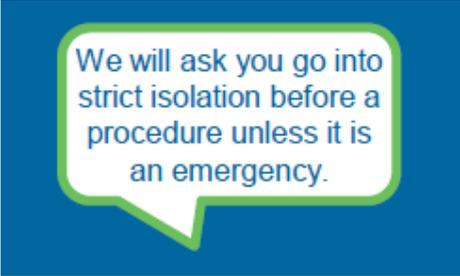
There are other factors that will increase your of being very unwell with COVID-19 under any circumstances, but also after an operation - being over 70, obesity, smoking and already having other health conditions.

As COVID-19 is a relatively new virus, the knowledge about the risks will change as we learn more. Your surgical team will share the most up to date information that they have with you so that you can make an informed decision.

It is also important to remember that choosing to delay or cancel your operation could make your condition worse.

WHAT WE WILL DO

We will do everything we can to keep you safe, and to provide you with information at all stages. We will listen to your concerns and discuss them with you. To try and minimise the risk of you being Covid-19 positive without you knowing, you will be required to undergo testing prior to attending for your surgery. However, even with pre-treatment testing, there is no way of being absolutely certain you are not developing an infection with Coronavirus.



We will ask you go into strict isolation before a procedure unless it is an emergency.

If you do develop symptoms after being tested for Coronavirus contact us immediately.

If you develop symptoms after you have had your operation you will be advised on what to do by the appropriate department responsible for your care.

We are recommending that you self-isolate at home prior to your treatment, test or surgery. You will be advised how long to isolate for by the team responsible for this aspect of your care. It is likely to be a period of 14 days.

Self-isolating means staying at home at all times, having no or minimal contact with other people. You should sleep in a separate room if possible, and observe strict hand hygiene. Family members or friends should be asked to collect essential items of shopping or medication so you can stay at home.

Finally, although all staff with symptoms do not attend the hospital, it is possible to catch the infection during your treatment episode either from a staff member with unknown infection or from another patient.

We understand that you may wish to delay your treatment, test or surgery and will ensure that you are fully informed of the risks of doing so. However, please be aware that future dates for operations may take much longer than normal to arrange. If you decide to delay treatment your consultant will discuss alternative care options if appropriate.

Need more information?

If you have any questions or concerns that have not been addressed, please contact your Consultants Secretary.