



Patient Information

Undergoing Surgery and the Risk of Covid-19 infection

Background

The Government and the NHS nationally have made it clear that all urgent and cancer treatment should continue to be prioritised wherever possible during the response to the COVID-19 emergency; as we move into the next phase of the pandemic we are able to offer surgery to more patients waiting.

We recognise that surgery performed on a patient with active COVID-19 infection, or who develops such an infection in the immediate post-operative period, carries a significant safety risk to the patient. Surgery in such cases should be delayed until after the patient has recovered from COVID-19 infection. We have therefore put a process in place to minimise the chance of you developing COVID-19 infection either just before or immediately after your operation.

What this means for you:

A member of the booking team will contact you by telephone to agree a date for surgery, which will be performed a minimum of fourteen days later. Following new guidance, patients needing surgery will have to self-isolate for 3 days rather than 14 days before the operation, unless they have been advised otherwise. Instead, patients will need to:

- Observe social distancing and practice good hand hygiene 14 days before admission
- Get tested for COVID-19 three days before admission. Your test results will be ready before the day of admission
- Self-isolate at home from the day of your **COVID Test** until the day of admission, along with members of your household if you do not live alone
- Undergo a final assessment on the day of admission where we will check you for any symptoms

Patients at higher risk due to pre-existing health conditions may be advised by their clinician to continue self-isolating for 14 days before admission.

It is very important that you take this request seriously for your own health, for the health of the NHS staff caring for you and for the health of other patients.



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Covid Testing

The booking team will also arrange for you to undergo a routine test for COVID-19 infection **three days before the planned date of your operation**. You will only be contacted if your results are positive and your operation needs to be rescheduled.

You will also need to come to hospital for blood and other tests; we will inform you of the dates of these separately.

Isolation between COVID Swab and your Surgery

You must ensure that you and your household self-isolate from the day of your COVID swab and your operation. This means:

1. You must not leave your house, even to go for a walk, aside for reasons related to your admission, such as for swabbing and other pre-operative tests.
2. You must not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces, for example, family homes, weddings and religious services.
3. You must strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough and/or Anosmia (The loss of or a change in your normal sense of smell. It can also affect your sense of taste as the two are closely linked.)
4. You must not go shopping; ask friends and neighbours to support you or use online services.

We recognise that the decision to undergo surgery will make this a very difficult and stressful time for you and therefore that you will benefit from close support and contact with your immediate family household members. For that reason, it is best that the whole household should self-isolate to protect you, but if any member of the household, such as a key-worker who continues to work away from home, is unable to self-isolate in this way, they should separate themselves from you by:

- Minimising the time that they spend with you.
- Keeping at least 3 steps (2 metres) from you.
- Avoiding using the kitchen when you are there and by keeping their own separate crockery and cutlery.
- Having their meals in their room where possible.
- Using separate towels and, if possible, a separate bathroom.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Why do I need to self-isolate before my operation?

- It is still necessary to self-isolate between your COVID Swab and operation date in order to minimise the chances of catching/developing COVID during this time.

Why do I need to have a COVID-19 swab test three days before my operation?

- Although it can take fourteen days after infection with COVID-19 to develop symptoms of the disease, not everyone who is infected develops symptoms. Those asymptomatic patients may still be at risk of transmitting the disease to others or of developing a more serious infection when their immune response is compromised by surgery. It is therefore necessary to perform a test three days before surgery in order to be as sure as we can that you do not have COVID-19 when you come into hospital. You will need to self-isolate in the period between the swab being taken and your admission.

Why can't I have my COVID-19 swab taken in clinic on the day that I agree with my surgeon to undergo an operation?

- At the time that you make your decision to undergo surgery, it is possible that you could be in the early stages of an infection with COVID-19, but swabs won't detect the virus until you have been infected for several days. Therefore a swab taken at the time when you agree to surgery would not exclude the risk that you could still develop the disease a week or so later, which might be just before or just after your operation.

Why does my whole family need to self-isolate?

- Even if you self-isolate you can still contract COVID-19 from someone with whom you live who might have picked it up on a trip out the house during your period of self-isolation.

Why can't a family member go shopping for all of us?

- As above, a family member could easily pick up the virus while on a shopping trip and pass it to you on return. Ask friends, neighbours or other family members with whom you **don't** live to do your shopping for you. Ask them to leave the shopping in a place where you can collect it and consider wiping down the carrier-handles.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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