



Patient Information

COVID-19 Testing Prior to Caesarean Section

Background

We recognise that if you have surgery when you have a COVID-19 infection or if you develop the infection soon after surgery that you are at an increased risk of complications. 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 Caesarean Section.

What this means for you:

A member of the team will contact you on Thursday afternoon the week prior to your Caesarean Section by telephone to confirm your surgery date and book you a COVID-19 test 72 hours beforehand. This test will be done at the 'Testing Station' which is situated at the back of the Great Western Hospital near the Brunel Treatment Centre (BTC).

Following new guidance, patients undergoing surgery will have to self-isolate for 3 days rather than 14 days before their Caesarean Section, unless they have been advised otherwise. In addition, patients will need to:

- Observe social distancing and practice good hand hygiene in the 14 days before admission
- Get tested for COVID-19 72 hours before admission as above. Your test results will be ready on the day of your Caesarean Section.
- Self-isolate at home from the day of your COVID-19 Test until the day of admission, along with members of your household if you do not live alone.

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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Isolation between COVID-19 Swab and your Caesarean Section

You must ensure that you and your household self-isolate from the day of your COVID-19 swab to the day of 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 this will be 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:

- 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-19 Swab and operation date in order to minimise the chances of catching/developing COVID-19 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 are given your confirmed Caesarean Section date, 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 too early 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 surgery.

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.



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Can my children still attend school during this isolation period before my Caesarean Section?

Yes your children can still go to school as long as the family remain in their bubble travelling to and from school or ideally see if a friend or relative can accompany the child(ren)

Can other people be in the car with me when I attend for my COVID-19 test?

Yes. Ideally only those within the family bubble

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

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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