

Preparing for your procedure or surgery

September 2020

Information leaflet

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Welcome to St George's

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, our teams are working extra hard to keep you safe whilst in hospital.

You will notice some changes when you visit our hospitals – for example, all our staff are wearing face masks, and patients and visitors are required to wear face coverings as well.



Signage is in place to ensure people observe social distancing – and everyone is being encouraged to wash their hands more regularly than usual.

Despite this, many aspects of the care our teams provide hasn't changed – and our focus remains on providing outstanding care, every time for people using our services.

If you have any questions during your stay or visit, please do not hesitate to speak to a member of staff.

Thank you,

Robert Bleasdale

Chief Nursing Officer and Director of Infection Prevention and Control

Preparing for your procedure or surgery

This leaflet is designed to help you prepare for your visit to hospital for your planned surgery or procedure.

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, we have put a range of additional measures in place to keep you safe during your stay with us.

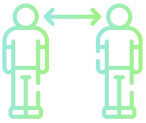
Of course, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to speak to a member of staff.



What are we doing to protect you?

We have put in place a number of measures to protect you during your visit to hospital.

These include:



Strict infection prevention protocols and social distancing guidance



Deep-cleaning our hospital theatres, equipment and wards even more often than usual



Providing dedicated operating theatres for patients being treated for planned procedures, away from other areas of the hospital;



Keeping our staff safe by providing them with the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE)



Ensuring that anyone who comes to hospital for surgery and some other planned care has followed guidance on self-isolating, and tested negative for Coronavirus.

What do you need to do before your treatment?

To help us protect you and all our patients and staff from Coronavirus, before you come to hospital for your planned procedure or surgery we ask that you:



Self-isolate for 14 days, or for a shorter period following your Covid-19 swab test. Our staff will advise you how long you need to self-isolate for.



Test negative for Covid-19 before your procedure



Let us know if you develop any symptoms of Coronavirus or flu so we can rearrange your procedure.

Symptoms for Coronavirus include:



A high temperature



A new, continuous cough



Loss or change to your sense of taste or smell.

What is your risk of getting Coronavirus while in hospital?

It is currently not possible to eliminate entirely the risk of catching Coronavirus in the community, or whilst you are in hospital. However, like all hospitals, we are taking every possible measure to minimise your risk of infection.

There are also important actions you will need to take before, during and after your treatment or surgery to help us reduce the risk as much as possible. This will be discussed with you before your planned treatment or surgery, and can also be found in this leaflet.

Please remember to ask our clinical team if you are unsure, and we would encourage you to write down any questions that you may have.

Self-isolating before a planned procedure

You must self-isolate for a period of time before your treatment to reduce the risk of Covid-19 for you and for others also undergoing treatment or surgery. Depending on the procedure, you will be asked to self-isolate for 14 days, or for a shorter period following your Covid-19 swab test. Our staff will advise you how long you need to self-isolate for.

This applies to all surgical procedures, including Day Surgery. Your clinical teams will advise you on the period of time you will need to self-isolate prior to your treatment or procedure – and the length of time you need to self-isolate for will depend on a number of factors, including the type of procedure you are undergoing.

Regardless of how long you are asked to self-isolate for, before your treatment you should not:



Leave your home to go to work, school, or public areas



Use public transport or taxis



Attend any gatherings, even with friends and families in private spaces for example family homes, weddings or religious services.



Go out even to buy food or other essentials, unless absolutely necessary. When arranging food or medication deliveries, these should be left at the door to minimise contact.

You should:



Use telephone or online services if you need to contact your GP or other essential services



Regularly wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds



Ask carers or support workers who visit your home to also regularly wash their hands.

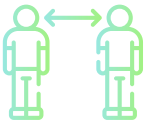
Reducing non-essential contact with other members of your household

We understand that sometimes it may not be possible for you to fully self-isolate. If members of your household have to continue to go to work, or if you have children who go to school and are unable to self-isolate, you should try to reduce all non-essential contact with other members of your household.

You can reduce contact with other members of your household by:



Minimising the time you spend in shared spaces like kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep these shared spaces well ventilated



Maintaining some social distancing with other people you live with by keeping 2 metres apart (3 steps) and encouraging them to sleep in a different bed where possible



If you can, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household.

If you share a toilet and bathroom with others:



Consider drawing up a bathing rota. You should schedule yourself to use the facilities first.



Use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.



It is important that the toilet and bathroom are cleaned every time after use. Wipe surfaces you all have come into contact with such as taps, handles, and countertops

Avoid using your kitchen when others in the household are present and if possible:



Take your meals back to your room to eat



Use a dishwasher to clean and dry used crockery and cutlery but if this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing-up liquid and water and dry them thoroughly



If you are using your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.

Further information about the steps to take to self-isolate is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection>

This self-isolation and testing is in line with national guidance set out to protect both patients and staff in our hospitals.

What should you do if you develop Coronavirus symptoms?

You must let us know immediately if you think you have symptoms of coronavirus or flu including a high temperature, new continuous cough, or loss or change in your sense of smell or taste.

If you or a household member develops symptoms of Coronavirus or have confirmed Coronavirus, please stay at home and arrange a test immediately. You can find information and advice at www.nhs.uk

What happens next?

A member of staff will contact you before your surgery and ask you a few questions to see if you are well enough to come into hospital, and to confirm that you have been able to follow the self-isolation advice.

We will also contact you to arrange for you to be tested for Coronavirus 3 (three) days before your treatment. This applies to all patients, regardless of how long you have been asked to self-isolate for.



The test is quick, easy and painless, and involves staff taking a swab of the back of your throat and the inside of your nose, using a long cotton bud.

The swab will be taken during your pre-assessment appointment, or you may need to visit our dedicated testing centre at St George's Hospital in Tooting. Please await further guidance from our staff.

We will contact you to confirm your results. Your operation or procedure will not take place if you test positive for Coronavirus unless it is very urgent or considered an emergency by the clinical team.

Arriving for your treatment

On the day of your treatment, please try to arrive as close to the time we have given you as possible as we are trying to limit the numbers of patients waiting to be seen in the hospital.

As you have been self-isolating, you should not use public transport to travel to the hospital on the day of your treatment. You should either walk to hospital or drive in your own vehicle or arrange for a family member who you have been self-isolating with to drive you.

If you are unable to make your own way to hospital, please discuss this with the hospital team who may be able to book our patient transport service.

When you arrive, we will take your temperature and ask you some simple questions to check if you have any symptoms and we will give you a surgical face mask that you must wear whilst you are in the hospital.

Please wear a face covering when entering the hospital; this is something all patients and visitors are required to do.



Visitors while you are in hospital

To reduce the risk of infection, we are not currently allowing visitors into the hospital. However, there are some exceptional circumstances in which visitors will be allowed to accompany patients, for example:

Maternity - One visiting birth partner is allowed on to the postnatal and delivery suite areas. From 10am-6pm one birth partner can accompany their partner on the ward areas. Visit the maternity pages on our website for more information.

Paediatric/Neonatal Unit/Paediatric Intensive Care Unit - Paediatric patients are allowed one parent or carer.

End-of-life patients - End-of-life patients on our Intensive Care Units are allowed up to two visitors a day. End-of-life patients on a ward are allowed up to two visitors per day. Children under 12 who are visiting a dying parent are permitted access provided the ward sister is in agreement. Visits will be by appointment only, and the names of visitors clearly documented by staff for infection control purposes.

Patients with specific care needs - Patients with specific care needs (e.g. dementia or other disabilities) are allowed one visitor or carer to visit between 8am-8pm, any day of the week.

Emergency Department patients - Patients visiting our Emergency Department can be accompanied by one other person. Whilst in hospital, our staff will help you to keep in touch with family and loved ones via telephone and video calls, and will be able to provide them with updates on your treatments and condition if needed.

Visiting arrangements are subject to change at short notice, so please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk for the latest information.

Wearing a face mask while in hospital

For your own protection, and to protect other patients and staff, we are now asking adult patients (who are able to) to wear face masks in hospital after they have been admitted.

A surgical face mask will be provided and patients can obviously remove the face mask for eating – and at any other times if they choose.

Patients can decline to wear a mask if they wish, and we recognise there will be occasions where it is not appropriate for patients to wear a mask, for example, those on oxygen therapy. Our clinical teams will use their judgement when offering a face mask to patients.

Please note: the request for patients to wear a surgical mask during their stay only applies to adults. Children will not be asked to wear a mask, although we appreciate some older children will choose to.

How to wear a surgical face mask or face cover

Before putting on a mask, clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Open the mask to fully cover from above your nose to below your chin. If the mask has a nose bar, pinch around your nose to hold in position.

When you are wearing a face mask

Avoid touching the mask or your face under the mask. If the mask becomes damp, clean your hands and replace the mask. Keep your mask on until asked by a healthcare provider to remove it.

Removing the mask

When removing your mask, please remember the following:

- Clean your hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water
- Do not touch the front of the mask. Remove using the ties or elastic loops.
- Discard immediately in a garbage disposal bin.
- Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.
- Never reuse masks.

After your treatment

Recovering at home

If you have had surgery, we advise that you keep contact with others to a minimum for four weeks to further minimise your risk of contracting coronavirus during your recovery.



Follow the instructions on your discharge letter

You should always follow all the instructions given to you on your discharge letter.

You should also have a contact number from your surgical 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, district nursing or occupational therapy, the same infection prevention measures outlined above will be used in these facilities.

The follow up care will be discussed with you and outlined on your discharge summary.

If you have to stay in hospital for a prolonged period

If you stay in the hospital for a prolonged period, you will be tested for coronavirus every week. Before leaving hospital, you may be asked to repeat the test, even if you have no symptoms. If you have been tested positive for coronavirus you may be cared for in a separate area of the hospital prior to discharge.

If you are discharged to a care home or hospice

If you are being discharged to a care home or hospice, we will test you for Coronavirus before you leave the hospital.

Additional Support available

You may be able to get help with practical issues such as shopping or arranging for someone to check in on you or call you on the phone, if you are isolated. This can be arranged through your Local Authority's support service networks or your GP surgery may have a 'social prescribing link worker'.

Follow up appointments

Where possible, follow-up outpatient appointments may now take place over the telephone or via video consultation. Our staff will discuss this with you.

If you or your family/carers have more questions or any concerns

If you have any further questions, please do speak to the doctors or nurses looking after you. Alternatively you can make contact with the local Patient Advice and Liaison Service via the hospital switchboard.

Useful Information

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 020 8725 2453

Email: pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

St George's Hospital switchboard:

Tel: 020 8672 1255



Queen Mary's Hospital switchboard:

020 8487 6000



NHS 111

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do.

- go to 111.nhs.uk (for people aged 5 and over only)
- call 111

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.