

Preparing for Surgery at St George's Hospital

(Including Surgical Treatment Centre at Queen Mary's Hospital)

This leaflet provides information on what to expect during your surgery at our hospital. It also offers advice and guidance on how you, along with your family and friends, can prepare for the procedure.

If you need an interpreter on the day of your surgery or information in a different language or format, please contact the number on the top right of your theatre appointment letter.

Getting ready at home in the days leading up to your surgery

Feeling unwell?

If you have 'flu, cold or cough symptoms, chest problems, diarrhoea, vomiting or have been exposed to chickenpox, you must contact the number on your admission letter.

Your surgery may need to be rescheduled to make your procedure as safe as possible.

Lifestyle changes

Preparing for surgery involves considering your routines, activities, eating habits, overall lifestyle and making adjustments to improve your health and wellbeing, which can enhance your recovery. This process is known as prehabilitation.

We offer prehabilitation clinics called Surgery School, where anaesthetic consultants, dietitians, physiotherapists and psychologists work together to help patients prepare for the best possible surgical outcome. If you would like to attend this clinic in person or virtually, please contact us by phone at 020 8266 6921 or email us at surgeryschool@stgeorges.nhs.uk

We recommend you stop smoking as early as possible prior to surgery to help reduce the risk of post-operative complications. Stopping the use of any recreational drugs will also reduce complications during surgery.

Eating a balanced diet and working towards a healthy BMI (Body Mass Index) is always helpful to minimise complications during and after surgery.

The Pre-Operative Assessment Unit offers a range of referral pathways designed to help optimize your health before surgery, aiming to improve your outcomes post-operation. This may include referrals to specialists such as those managing anaemia, body weight, and diabetes, as well as your GP and other national health initiatives. You may be eligible for one of these referrals, and more information is available on our website:

[Preoperative Assessment - St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#)

Medications and Pain killers

Please bring all medications which you are currently taking in their original packaging on the day of your admission. If you plan to go home on the same day as your surgery, we recommend purchasing non-prescription painkillers, such as paracetamol and ibuprofen (if safe for you), in advance. This may help avoid waiting for our pharmacy to supply them. If you are unable to purchase these painkillers, we will provide them for you.

You may be asked to stop some specific medications before surgery. Please follow these instructions.

Returning to work and obtaining sick notes

You will need to inform your employer about your surgery and recovery time. At a minimum, you should take the day of surgery and the following day off from work. Your surgeon will advise if you need more time. If you require more than seven days off, we will provide a fit note upon your discharge. Any additional fit notes can be obtained from your GP.

For further guidance on activities to avoid right after surgery, please refer to our '*You and Your Anaesthetic*' leaflet.

What to Bring with you to the hospital

If you are informed that your surgery is a day case procedure, please bring the following items.

- ☐ Your admission letter and any information we have sent you regarding your surgery.
- ☐ Any medications including sprays, patches, creams, drops or inhalers, in their original packaging.
- ☐ The name, address with post code and telephone number for your GP.
- ☐ Your glasses, dentures and any mobility or hearing aids.
- ☐ Something to help occupy your time either when waiting for surgery or on the ward.
- ☐ A 'CPAP' machine if you use one.

If you are notified that your surgery will be performed as an inpatient procedure requiring an overnight stay or more than one night stay, please bring the following items.

- ☐ All the above
- ☐ Small amounts of money (to buy newspapers, television credits or other items)
- ☐ Bathing toiletries and sanitary products; including toothbrush, hairbrush.
- ☐ Your mobile phone and charger.
- ☐ Slippers.
- ☐ Extra Carrier bag to place your shoes / jackets.

Please note that the bag should be no larger than a small shopping bag. It is recommended to avoid using trolley bags.

Planning for your return home

To help with your recovery at home after surgery, it may be useful to plan for the following:

- ☐ How you will travel to and from the hospital
- ☐ Arranging for an adult to pick you up from the hospital and stay with you for 24 hours after discharge if your surgery is a day procedure.
- ☐ Ensuring you have the necessary food, supplies and groceries at home
- ☐ Making arrangements for any childcare you may need
- ☐ Planning for any important tasks or decisions you may need to handle in the days following surgery, such as signing contracts.

Driving after an operation

Please note that after any general anaesthetic or sedation, you must not drive for at least 24 hours. This is because the drugs given during your anaesthetic or sedation can affect your reactions and how you think and make decisions. It takes at least 24 hours for your body to get rid of these medicines.

It may take longer to recover from your surgery than from your anaesthetic. Your surgeon will give you advice on when it should be safe for you to drive after your procedure or operation.

You should check with your insurance company that you are covered to drive after your surgery.

Check with the [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency \(DVLA\)](#) about any specific time periods recommended.

On the day of your surgery

On the day of your surgery, please make sure to:

- Remove all makeup, contact lenses and nail varnish.
- Take a bath or shower and brush your teeth.
- Remove all jewellery (except for wedding rings) and any metal body piercings.
- Please do not smoke cigarettes or other nicotine products, chew gum or consume alcohol on the day of surgery.
- Ensure that you follow the below fasting instructions.

Fasting Instructions

If you have been given specific instructions on fasting and asked to take a bowel preparation medication, please follow them.

If you have not been given specific instructions, the following general instructions would apply.

If your admission time is before 11.00am

Time	Food	Water (see below) *
Before 2am	YES	YES
2am to 6am	NO	YES
After 6am	NO	NO

If your admission time is after 11.00am

Time	Food	Water (see below) *
Before 7am	YES (light breakfast as cereal or toast)	YES
7am to 11am	NO	YES
From 11am	NO	NO

* You must avoid fizzy drinks, milk, dairy products or dairy alternatives during fasting hours as they take longer to digest. You can drink water, black coffee, black tea carbohydrate drink provided by hospital or diluted fruit squash / cordial without pulp or bits.

You can continue taking all your regular medications on the morning of surgery, **except** for any that you have been specifically instructed to stop before the procedure.

Arriving at the admission Unit

When you arrive at the Surgical Admission Lounge (SAL), Day Surgery Unit (DSU) or a ward, a nurse will help prepare you for surgery. This includes completing paperwork, taking clinical observations and giving you the necessary surgical garments. If you are a woman under 60, you may need to take a pregnancy test.

Next, you will meet with your anaesthetist and a member of the surgical team, who will explain the anaesthesia process and the details of your surgery. You will then be asked to sign a consent form, confirming your agreement for surgery and understanding of the procedure. Both your anaesthetist and surgeon will be available to answer any questions you have. You can withdraw your consent at any time, even if you have previously agreed.

During your waiting time in the admission area, we will liaise with your surgical team regarding your approximate 'sending time' to operating theatres and would encourage you to take sips of water until you are sent to theatres.

How long will you need to wait in the admission unit?

The time listed on your letter is your admission time, not the surgery time. While your surgeon or anaesthetist will try to give you an estimate of the wait, it can be unpredictable. It's a good idea to bring something to help pass the time.

If you are attending Surgical Treatment Centre (STC) at Queen Mary's Hospital, a reception team member may call you the day before your surgery to give a new admission time. This allows STC to stagger patients' admission times to reduce waiting times as there are limited waiting areas in this department.

Who can accompany you?

Patients under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Our Day Surgery Unit (DSU) and Surgical Admission Lounge (SAL) areas are for drop-off and pick-up only, so accompanying adults cannot stay and wait with you. This is due to limited space and to ensure the safety, security and dignity of our patients.

If you have concerns or need to discuss exceptional circumstances, please speak to a member of our staff in confidence upon arrival or contact us in advance using the number on your admissions letter. We will do our best to accommodate you where possible.

If you are an accompanying adult

Our DSU and SAL are for drop-off and pick-up only. Accompanying adults cannot wait there and children, including siblings of patients, are not allowed. If you choose to wait on the hospital grounds, please be aware that the wait may be long. There are several cafés, restaurants and waiting areas, to which staff can direct you.

You can see the patient once they are out of recovery and staff will let you know where to collect them. You will need to help escort them home and ensure they have care and support from a responsible adult for the first 24 hours.

We will need a way to contact you on the day of surgery. Please ensure your phone is fully charged and you are reachable throughout the day. We will notify you when the patient is nearly ready for discharge. Please see additional information for parking queries

If you are discharged the same day

Your designated next of kin will be informed of the time to come and collect you nearer to the time of discharge.

You will move to a single-sex patient-only discharge lounge, where you will be given some light refreshments and have your last set of clinical checks from our nursing team. In some circumstances, you may also get discharged straight from our recovery areas.

You will be given sufficient postoperative instructions, painkillers if needed and details of any follow up appointments that you may need. You will also be given the contact number for support in case you have any queries.

Extended recovery and 23 hours stay

The Day Surgery Unit offers extended recovery, allowing us to discharge patients until 11pm. In some cases, day surgery may provide up to 23 hours of care for patients who need to stay overnight before going home. You and your next of kin will be informed of this at the time of admission.

Recovering in hospital

If the surgery is an inpatient procedure, the admitting unit will give you the contact number for the recovery unit, where patients stay after surgery before being moved to a postoperative ward. The designated next of kin can contact the recovery unit to learn to which ward the patient will be transferred.

On admission to the postoperative ward, the nursing team will provide you with relevant welcome information, including visiting times and facilities. Your recovery time in the inpatient ward will usually be confirmed by your lead surgeon before your operation. In some cases, with the overwhelming demands in surgical bed capacity, you may need to stay in Recovery overnight where you can be safely looked after. This is one of our measures to avoid cancelling your procedure if a ward bed is not available straight away.

Contact us

If you have any problems before admission or after returning home, you can contact us using the below numbers.

- Day Surgery Unit, St George's Hospital: 020 8725 0420 / 0418 (Monday to Friday 7.30am to 8.30pm)
- Surgical Admissions Lounge, St George's Hospital: 020 8725 5710 (Monday to Friday 7.3am to 08.30pm)
- Surgical Treatment Centre, Queen Mary's Hospital: 020 8266 6393 (Monday to Friday 7.30am to 8pm)

Out of hours please contact our main recovery unit on 020 8725 3118 / 3707

You can find contact numbers to wards and various recovery units using St George's direct line on 020 8672 1255.

Please note that any confirmation about a date for your operation or changing your planned date of surgery can only be obtained via patient pathway coordinators for each specific speciality. Their contact number would be available at the top right of your surgeon's clinic appointment letter or your theatre appointment letter.

Useful sources of information

For more information about the anaesthesia process or if you need information translated into another language, please visit the following website:

[Patient information leaflets and video resources | The Royal College of Anaesthetists](#)

Additional Information

Parking Services

Car parking is pay upon exit and the tariff is as follows:

Up to one hour	£2.50
Up to two hours	£5.00
Up to three hours	£7.50
Up to four hours	£10.00
Up to five hours	£12.50
Up to six hours	£15.00
Up to seven hours	£17.50
Up to eight hours	£20.00
Over eight hours (daily fixed rate)	£25.00

Parking is free between 10pm and 6am.

Card payment transactions at Security Desk only; (Ground floor, Grosvenor wing, near Marks and Spencer's).

For inpatients, you can designate one person to benefit from concessionary car parking charges. Please contact the ward for details.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Was this information helpful? Yes / No

Please let us know, contact patient.information@stgeorges.nhs.uk and include the leaflet title.

Thank you.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.
Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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