

Patient information

Having planned surgery

Covid-19 guidance

Planned Care



Introduction

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust takes the safety of patients very seriously. We are committed to making it as safe as possible for you to have your procedure under anaesthesia.

Despite the easing of lockdown rules and the lower national infection rates, we continue to live with Covid-19 (coronavirus). This infectious acute respiratory disease still poses a risk to everyone due to its multiple variants.

The advice within this information leaflet has been put together for your safety – we strongly recommend and encourage you to follow the safer behaviour guidance to reduce the risk of operating on you during the incubation period for coronavirus.

Your planned elective procedure will be in one of our dedicated theatre suites at Lister Hospital or one of our private provider partners.

All inpatients are asked to test for Covid-19 on days 3, 5, and 7. The Trust will provide these tests.

Before your surgery

- Follow social distancing and minimise contact with other people for 4 days before your procedure. We advise you to take extra steps to protect yourself and socially distance for longer if you have multiple health issues and are clinically vulnerable.
- If unavoidable and you are out in public or a crowded space, please wear a face covering.
- Follow good handwashing guidance and use alcohol gel if possible.
- Please order two free lateral flow test (LFT) kits from the gov.uk website or call 119. You should order them 10 days before your procedure to ensure that the kits are with you at least 4 days before your admission.
- Use one of the LFT kits to check for Covid-19. You must do this 96 hours (4 days) before admission at **8am**.

- As soon as the LFT result is available, download the result to the gov.uk website or call 119 to report the result.
- If you test positive for Covid-19, please let us know by sending an email to **enh-tr.covidpositiveresult@nhs.net** before **9am** on the morning of the test.

Alternatively, please call the relevant pre-operative assessment team – the phone numbers are on the back cover of this leaflet. Please leave a message giving your name, hospital number (you will find this on your admission letter), and a telephone number we can contact you on.

- If you need to have a Covid-19 PCR test, the hospital will provide this and the pre-operative assessment nurse will explain what happens next.

On the day of your admission

- Use the second LFT kit to check again for Covid-19 before you leave home for the hospital.
- Download your results to the gov.uk website and bring the email or text reply from gov.uk with you to show the admission staff.
- Provided your test result is negative, please make your way to the hospital.
- **If you test positive for Covid-19 on the day of your operation, please call the admissions unit** (contact numbers on the back cover of this leaflet). **Do not come into hospital, even if you do not have symptoms.**
- On entering the hospital, please wear one of the **face masks** provided unless exempt from doing so. Free masks are available at all entrances.
- On arrival to the admissions area, you will notice that all staff will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Also, our staff test themselves for Covid-19 to help keep you and our colleagues safe.
- A member of staff will ask you questions about your current health status, this is called screening. The questionnaire is a comprehensive list of questions about Covid-19 symptoms.

- If you answer 'yes' or have had these symptoms within 7 days, your surgery may have to be postponed - the next section explains further.

What if I test positive for Covid-19 before my admission?

Do not come into hospital if you test positive for Covid-19.

Following current recommendations from the Royal College of Anaesthetists and the Royal College of Surgeons, if you test positive for Covid-19 we may need to postpone your surgery for at least 7 weeks if you are on a **routine pathway**.

In this instance, your surgical team will review the clinical urgency of your surgery and the risk, benefits and consequences of proceeding with a recent Covid-19 diagnosis.

If you are on a **rapid urgent pathway**, and your surgery cannot be delayed for the full 7 weeks, your procedure may have to be postponed for at least until 10 days have passed since you first had symptoms or tested positive for Covid-19. Your surgical team will advise you of this.

I do not want to take the Covid-19 test, what now?

The recommendations outlined in this leaflet are taken from the latest science to support you to make an informed decision. However, we understand that everyone's thoughts and experience of Covid-19 is different. Your circumstances will be discussed with the multidisciplinary team involved in your care, and we will discuss the options available with you.

If surgery is still in your best interest, there may be a delay of up to 7 weeks as the risks may be considered too significant for you, other patients and the staff. It is important to note that, because your Covid-19 status is unknown, you will be treated as if you were Covid-19 positive throughout your admission pathway.

If I test positive for Covid-19, how long am I considered infectious and when can I have my operation?

Most people are considered infectious for the first 5 to 10 days after a positive Covid-19 result or from the first onset of symptoms. After that, the vast majority of people recover well but, unfortunately, we also now know that some people go on to experience what is now called Post-COVID Syndrome (Long-COVID or Post-Acute Sequelae SARS-CoV-2 infection). In addition, some people have periods where they feel they have recovered, and other times when they 'relapse' and feel unwell again – everyone's Covid-19 recovery can be different.

With this in mind, we do not look at the timing of your operation in isolation. The multidisciplinary team use risk assessments to determine the overall risk, benefits and consequences of deferring your operation. Following a discussion involving you, to ensure that you are fully aware of all the risks and benefits, we will decide if surgery should be rescheduled and when this will be.

What are the risks for me if I have an anaesthetic and surgery in the early incubation period of Covid-19?

We know that you may have been waiting a long time for your operation date and are keen to have the surgery. However, an elective pathway gives us the appropriate opportunity and time to do everything we can to minimise the risks to you, and others, so that your procedure can take place safely.

- Common symptoms of Covid-19 infection include a persistent cough, breathlessness, chest tightness and/or pain, palpitations, dizziness, poor or reduced sleep, fatigue, pins and needles or numbness, anxiety and low mood.

All of these could cause complications for you while under an anaesthetic and afterwards when recovering from surgery.

This could mean a longer stay in hospital and an increased risk of post-operative complications, such as a chest infection or a blood clot. We also know there is an increased mortality rate for patients operated on within the first 6-7 weeks after a Covid-19 illness.

Can I have visitors after my operation?

We have eased our visiting restrictions at Lister Hospital, so visitors are welcome to come to see you in line with the usual visiting times for the ward you are on. If a ward has to be closed to visitors, family members will be notified.

Your visitors must wear face coverings unless exempt. East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust continues to provide free face masks, which are available at all entrances to our hospitals. We ask that visitors wash and dry their hands before entering the ward and when they leave, and to please use the chairs provided during their visit and not to sit on your bed.

What advice would you give for when I am recovering from surgery at home?

If you are returning to your own home to recover after surgery, we recommend that you continue to stay safe and, where possible, limit your contact within large crowded areas, maintain social distancing, wear a face covering and follow good handwashing guidance.

Family and friends are often keen to offer their good wishes in person; please be mindful that your immune defences may be lower than before surgery, and you may also become fatigued more quickly.

However, it is essential to maintain a healthy balance between reducing your exposure risk to Covid-19 after your surgery, making a full physical recovery, and doing things which may keep you well, such as seeing friends and family.

It may be helpful to plan and structure your days and let friends and loved ones know when you are ready for them to visit, and for how long. If meeting indoors, consider opening windows or meet outside if the weather permits.

If you are returning to a care or nursing home, we will undertake a Covid-19 PCR test 3 days before discharge. Provided this is negative, your discharge plans can proceed from a Covid-19 point of view.

Please use this space to write down any questions you may wish to ask:

Useful telephone numbers

General Pre-op Assessment Team ☎ 01438 288134
☎ 01438 288115
☎ 07554 436742

ENT Pre-op Assessment Enquiries ☎ 07785 343359
☎ 07876 390290

Ophthalmology Pre-op Assessment enquiries ☎ 01438 288274

Admissions Unit (AU) ☎ 01438 285747

Treatment Centre Admissions (PACU) ☎ 01438 288163

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