

# Isolation Prior to Elective Surgery

## Pre-operative Assessment Patient Information

All patients and their households should isolate prior to their surgery, for a period of either 3 or 14 days, depending on individual risk.

### Why?

**Your safety** is our first priority. We want to make sure we perform your operation at the best time for you; therefore it is very important you **do not have coronavirus** (COVID-19) when we perform your operation. In addition, we equally need to ensure you do not bring coronavirus into the hospital.

Current evidence shows that some people with the coronavirus have minimal or no signs of illness; therefore, even if you feel completely well you could be infected with the virus. A small study suggests that people who are infected with coronavirus, but have not yet developed symptoms and go ahead with an operation, can become extremely unwell; in that study, many needed intensive care treatment and some patients died.

The **risk** which COVID presents to each person is different and depends on a number of factors, including other medical conditions, medications, age, sex, race as well as the operation you are having. Your surgical team will take all these factors into account and advise you whether you fall into the 'low, medium or high' risk category. In partnership with your surgeon and anaesthetist, you will need to decide whether the benefits from your planned operation exceed the risks to you at this point in time. In order to help you with this decision, your team will be using a scoring system we have compiled to assess your risk, called the BEST score (Bath elective surgery triage). Your team will calculate and use this score when they discuss the risks and benefits of surgery with you. For your information, this has been included at the bottom of the leaflet in order that you can see the factors

which are important. We encourage you to talk to your surgeon and anaesthetist about these risks so that you can make an informed decision and we welcome you contacting us via the pre-operative assessment department.

For patients who are thought to be at the highest risk from COVID, we ask that they and their household self-isolate for 14 days before their operation. This will include, for all patients, a COVID-19 swab test about 3 days before surgery. For lower risk patients, we ask that they self-isolate only for the 3 days between testing and surgery. Even if you are in a lower risk group, with few or no additional risk factors, you are of course free to choose to self-isolate for 14 days if you prefer.

A period of self-isolation will greatly reduce the chance that you are carrying the virus and therefore will reduce the risk to yourself and other patients. No surgery or anaesthetic comes without risk, but in this current climate, it is important that you understand that although the chance of serious complications remains low, it is certainly higher now, because of the incidence of covid-19 infection in our community.

Sadly we cannot guarantee that you will not contract coronavirus when you come into hospital, but we are doing everything we can to minimise this risk; use of appropriate PPE, social distancing, regular monitoring and early testing. If you decide you do not want your operation at this time, please just let our elective bookings team know on 01225 824539/ 01225 824214/ 01225 824538.

**All patients and their households must self-isolate at home for a period of either 3 or 14 days prior to date of surgery, depending on their BEST risk score.**

### What does household isolation mean?

- **Do not leave your home for any reason** – if you need food or medicine, order it online or by phone, or ask someone to deliver it to your home.
- **Do not have visitors in your home** – including friends and family.
- **Do any exercise at home** – you can use your garden, if you have one.

### Screening for Covid-19

- 48-72 hours prior to your date for surgery, you will need swabbing for Covid-19, after which you will be required to continue to isolate before attending for surgery.
- Wherever possible, **attend the hospital in your own family car**, ideally driven by yourself or a household member who is also in isolation. If other members of your household have not been able to maintain full isolation or you are unable to get to the RUH in your own family car, please ring 01225

825651 to discuss alternatives. Please do not attend by public transport or a taxi.

### Covid-19 results

- Your swab result may take up to **48 hours** to come back
- You will be contacted as soon as it is available to confirm whether your surgery can take place or not.
- **If the swab is negative** and you remain well, your surgery will go ahead. Details of where to come to and when, will be given to you at the time of this phone call.
- **If your swab is positive**, your surgery will be postponed. You will be asked to undergo a further period of isolation (minimum of 7 days but more usually 14 days) and will then undergo further swabbing

### What if household isolation is not possible?

Ideally your whole household would isolate with you prior to surgery. If this is not possible you can **shield within your household**.

#### Shielding within your household

- This means that the individual awaiting surgery 'shields' to distance themselves from others in the home to reduce the risk of infection.

There is guidance on the Government website about shielding:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding)

#### What precautions must be taken?

Advice to the patient staying at home:

- Minimise the time other people living with you spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated.
- Keep 2 metres away from people you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If you can, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
- If you share a toilet and bathroom with others, it's important that they are cleaned every time after use (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with you using the facilities first.
- If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while they're present. If you can, take your meals back to your room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing-up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. If you are using your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.
- Everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

## Planning for isolation

We understand that staying at home may be difficult and frustrating, but there are things that you can do to help make it easier. These include:

- Plan ahead and think about what you will need in order to be able to stay at home for the full 14 days.
- Talk to your employer, friends and family to ask for their help to access the things you will need to make your stay at home a success.
- Think about and plan how you can get access to food and other supplies such as medications that you will need during this period.
- Ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or order supplies online, but make sure these are left outside your home for you to collect.
- Make sure that you keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or through social media.
- Think about things you can do during your time at home. People who have successfully completed a period of staying at home have kept themselves busy with activities such as cooking, reading, online learning and watching films.
- Many people find it helpful to plan out the full 17 days, such as on a make-shift calendar.
- Remember that physical exercise can be good for your wellbeing. Look for online classes or courses that can help you take light exercise in your home.

**If, at any time during isolation, you or any family members become unwell, please let staff at the Pre-operative assessment department know as soon as possible by ringing 01225-825651.** If indicated, please also discuss your symptoms with your GP or with 111.

## Staying mentally and physically active

There are simple things you can do that may help to stay mentally and physically active during this time such as:

- Look for ideas of exercises you can do at home on the NHS website.
- Spend time doing things you enjoy such as reading, cooking, other indoor hobbies or listening to favourite radio programmes or watching TV.
- Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, drink enough water, exercise regularly, and try to avoid smoking, alcohol and drugs.
- Try spending time with the windows open to let in the fresh air, arranging space to sit and see a nice view (if possible) and get some natural sunlight, or get out into any private space, keeping at least 2 metres away from your neighbours and household members if you are sitting on your doorstep.

## Staying connected with family and friends

Use support you might have through your friends, family and other networks during this time. Try to stay in touch with those around you over the phone, by post or online.

Let people know how you would like to stay in touch and build that into your routine. This is also important in looking after your mental wellbeing and you may find it helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling if you want to.

### Looking after your mental wellbeing

Social isolation, reduction in physical activity, unpredictability and changes in routine can all contribute to increasing stress.

Understandably, you may find that self-isolation can be boring or frustrating. You may find your mood and feelings are affected and you may feel low, worried or have problems sleeping and you might miss being outside with other people.

At times like these, it can be easy to fall into unhealthy patterns of behaviour which in turn can make you feel worse.

Constantly watching the news can make you feel more worried. If you think it is affecting you, try to limit the time you spend watching, reading or listening to media coverage of the outbreak. It may help to only check the news at set times or limit this to a couple of times a day.

Try to focus on the things you can control, such as your behaviour, who you speak to and who you get information from. Every Mind Matters ([www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/)) provides simple tips and advice to start taking better care of your mental health.

If you're struggling with your mental health, see the NHS mental health and wellbeing advice website for self-assessment, audio guides and tools that you can use.

If you're receiving services for your mental health, learning disability or autism and are worried about the impact of isolation, contact your key worker or care coordinator or provider to review your care plan. If you have additional needs, contact your key worker or care coordinator to develop a safety or crisis plan.



### Further information:

#### Score for risk from COVID-19 around the time of surgery: Bath elective surgery triage (BEST)

Risk factor		Score
<b>Male</b>		1
<b>Age</b>	<b>50-60</b>	1
	<b>60-70</b>	2
	<b>&gt;70</b>	3
<b>Other medical conditions</b>  i.e. not the reason for your surgery	<b>A well-controlled medical condition:</b> includes all conditions listed by the NHS as <b>'High risk / clinically vulnerable'</b> <i>see below, box 1</i>	1
	<b>A severe medical condition</b> which affects your daily activities includes all conditions listed by the NHS as <b>'High risk / clinically extremely vulnerable'</b> <i>see below, box 2</i>	3
<b>Cancer diagnosis</b> confirmed or suspected		2
<b>Major surgery</b> more than one night hospital stay planned		2
<b>BAME</b> Black Asian & Minority Ethnic groups		2
<b>Pregnant</b>		1
<b>Taking medication which suppresses the immune system</b> e.g. steroids (prednisolone >10mg/day)		1
<b>TOTAL:</b>		



Total score	Action
0	<b>COVID swab test then 3 days self-isolation</b> before surgery
1 - 3	<b>COVID swab test then 3 days self-isolation</b> before surgery but you are at higher risk than average, so might <i>consider</i> 14 days' self-isolation
4 or more	<b>Recommend 14 days self-isolation</b> before surgery for you and your household (including test 3 days before admission)

**Box 1****MODERATE RISK: 'clinically vulnerable'**

- have a lung condition that's not severe (such as asthma, COPD, emphysema or bronchitis)
- have heart disease (such as heart failure)
- have diabetes
- have chronic kidney disease
- have liver disease (such as hepatitis)
- have a condition affecting the brain or nerves (such as Parkinson's disease, motor neurone disease, multiple sclerosis or cerebral palsy)
- have a condition that means they have a high risk of getting infections
- are taking medicine that can affect the immune system (such as low doses of steroids)
- are very obese (a BMI of 40 or above)

**Box 2****HIGH RISK: 'clinically extremely vulnerable'**

- have had an organ transplant
- are having chemotherapy or antibody treatment for cancer, including immunotherapy
- are having an intense course of radiotherapy (radical radiotherapy) for lung cancer
- are having targeted cancer treatments that can affect the immune system (such as protein kinase inhibitors or PARP inhibitors)
- have blood or bone marrow cancer (such as leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma)
- have had a bone marrow or stem cell transplant in the past 6 months, or are still taking immunosuppressant medicine
- have been told by a doctor they have a severe lung condition (such as cystic fibrosis, severe asthma or severe COPD)
- have a condition that means they have a very high risk of getting infections (such as SCID or sickle cell)
- are taking medicine that makes them much more likely to get infections (such as high doses of steroids or immunosuppressant medicine)
- have a serious heart condition and are pregnant

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Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) if you require this leaflet in a different format, or would like to feedback your experience of the hospital. Email [ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ruh-tr.pals@nhs.net) or telephone 01225 825656 / 826319.