

# Preparing for surgery during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic

---

- I have advised this patient to self-isolate for 14 days before and 14 days after surgery
- I have not advised this patient to self-isolate for 14 days before and 14 days after surgery

*Clinician to tick which is appropriate*

For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government and NHS England have recommended that urgent elective (planned) surgery should be prioritised wherever possible. At Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH) we will be doing everything we can to adhere to this guidance.

In addition to this, we will also be resuming non-urgent elective surgery as soon as it is appropriate to do so. When this happens, prioritisation of surgery will be based on clinical urgency.

Any surgery inherently carries a risk. However, if you have had COVID-19 - either prior to surgery or post-operatively - your recovery may be especially difficult, carrying an increased likelihood of serious complications or death. This will be discussed with you by a clinician or doctor, who will explain the surgery being proposed, the associated benefits, and any additional risks that might occur if you contract COVID-19.



The teams will also explain the new safety procedures in relation to the pandemic – which includes self-isolation before surgery and a COVID-19 swab test. During this time, the clinical team will address any concerns and questions you may have.

### **Planning your surgery**

If your procedure is classified as “routine”, then your doctor may recommend a delay. This decision will be dependent upon national / local COVID case figures and trends. If you are diagnosed with COVID-19, or are self-isolating due to recent contact with someone else with the virus, then elective (planned) surgery will be delayed. Please discuss this with your Consultant, Nurse Specialist or other members of the clinical team.

First, you will be contacted by our team, who will offer you a date for your surgery and a pre-operative assessment if you have not already had one.

### **Pre-operative assessment**

Your pre-op assessment will take place before your operation. It will be carried out via telephone if possible or, alternatively, through a face-to-face appointment. In order to minimise unnecessary visits to the hospital, face-to-face pre-ops may be undertaken on the same day as your initial clinic visit. If this is the case, then we will aim to ensure that all relevant tests are completed in one go.

Meanwhile, if you have a telephone assessment you may still need to attend hospital for certain investigations. Of course, this will be kept to a minimum.

### **Pre-operative swab test Covid-19**

You will be asked to attend the drive-through swabbing service approximately 72 hours prior to surgery. This is so that a COVID-19 test can be performed, whereby we will swab your nose/ throat and take any additional blood samples.

You will not need to leave your car for this test. If you are being driven there by someone who is not in your immediate household, then you and the driver should wear face masks / coverings. If you are unable to attend the drive-through facility, please inform the pre-assessment nurse or, if you have no pre assessment, contact the waiting list administration team.

## Self-isolation

You may be advised to self-isolate before the day of surgery. The period of self-isolation will be based on:

- Your risk of developing COVID-19.
- The impact that COVID-19 could have on you following your surgery (i.e: if your recovery will be more difficult or if there is an increased risk of death).

The clinical team will explain this to you at the time of your consultation. If you have concerns about being able to self-isolate; specialists will be on hand to discuss it with you in further detail.

If you are assessed as being at **High Risk** of developing COVID-19, you will be asked to self-isolate for a period of **14 days** prior to surgery. Please see the below guidance on self-isolation. Any members of your immediate household should also ensure that they follow current government guidelines on social distancing, hand hygiene and the appropriate use of face coverings - particularly in the 14 days prior to your operation.

If you are assessed as **not High Risk**, then you will be advised to self-isolate for a period of **3 days** prior to surgery. For the 14 days prior to your operation, it is still important that you and your immediate household members follow current government guidelines on social distancing, hand hygiene and appropriate use of face coverings.



**Please note that you will only be able to have surgery if your swab does NOT indicate COVID-19, you display no symptoms of the virus, and you have followed the self-isolation advice based on your risk assessment.**

## What is self-isolation?

During self-isolation, you will be asked to:

- Not leave home for any reason (other than a medical care or a COVID-19 swab). If you need food or medicine, please order these provisions over the phone or online. Alternatively, you can ask someone else to drop them off at your home. The only reason you should leave your home is for medical care / pre-surgery investigations including the Covid-19 swab.
- If you are able to, ask your employer if you can work from home. Alternatively, you will need to take time off work during this period of work. If you need a letter for your employer, this can be provided either in clinic or as part of your pre-operative assessment.
- Do not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your place of residence who are not already part of your household. If you have carers they must adhere to good hand hygiene practices upon entering and leaving your home and they should also wear a face mask whilst on the property.
- You can use your garden, if you have one, but any exercise must be taken at home.
- Separate yourself from other members of your household by:
  - > Minimising the time you spend in shared spaces like kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep these rooms well ventilated.
  - > If you share a bathroom, try to use it first or just after it has been cleaned. Clean wash facilities / toilets after usage.
  - > Do not share items like towels, face cloths or tea towels with other household members.
  - > Wash your hands regularly for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or hand sanitiser.

## **If you have NOT been advised to self-isolate for 14 days before surgery:**

- You may still choose to self-isolate for 14 days.
- You must self-isolate from the day of having your COVID-19 swab, which will be 72 hours before your surgery.
- You and your household should follow the government and NHS guidance on handwashing frequently for 20 seconds, each time using soap and water, or hand sanitiser.
- Maintain social distancing, and avoid large gatherings of people for the 14 days before surgery.
- Use of face coverings / face masks where possible.

## **Before surgery**

You will receive a phone call the day or weekend before your surgery, to check if anyone in the household has developed symptoms of COVID-19 and that you have followed the relevant self-isolation period specified. If you or any member of your household does have symptoms, you will need to follow national guidance and isolate for the agreed time period. If you do present symptoms, your operation will not be rescheduled until you have had a negative swab result. In such an event, the clinical team will contact you to explain exactly what you need to do it and what it means for your surgery.

## **If you develop symptoms during your period of self-isolation (prior to surgery) you must inform the team. In particular, you need to look out for:**

- A high temperature: You may either feel hot to touch on your chest or back, or have a temperature above 37.8 °C.
- A new, continuous cough: You may be coughing frequently for more than an hour, or you have three or more coughing episodes in 24 hours.
- Any change to your sense of smell or taste: You may have noticed that you cannot smell or taste anything, or that things smell and taste differently to normal.

If you do develop any of the above symptoms, please contact 111 for advice. Further information can also be found at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms). It is important that you follow this advice to make sure your treatment is as safe as possible.

## In the hospital

Depending on your admission location, this will be on your admission letter, you should use the following entrances:

### **Doncaster Royal Infirmary**

Park Hill Hospital: Enter via Gate 1 or Gate 5 and ask to be dropped off outside the entrance to Park Hill Hospital (in between the Women's Hospital & MRI / Chatfield's Suite). If you require assistance, there is a short stay carpark for visitors at the rear of the Women's Hospital that can be used.

Theatre Admission Unit: Enter via Gate 4 or Gate 5 and ask to be dropped off in the renal / children surgical unit carpark, or the Theatre Admissions Unit carpark.

G5: Enter via Gate 1 and access the Women's & Children's Hospital. From there, you will need to go to level 5 using the designated blue lift.

S10/S11: Enter via Gate 1 or Gate 5 and arrange drop off in the area to the rear of South Block Outpatients. This is signposted ESAC / Elective Surgery Drop Off. There is a side entrance which will lead you to the lift or stairs to S11. Short stay parking is available around that area.

### **Bassetlaw Hospital**

Day Surgery / Theatre Admissions Unit: Enter via Kilton or Blyth entrance and follow the road around to the Clinical Therapies entrance. Drop off areas are marked outside and, should you require assistance, short stay drop off parking will be available.

### **Mexborough Montagu Hospital**

Rockingham day surgery Unit: Please enter via the back of the Mexborough hospital.



**Please note face masks / coverings should be worn (unless you exempt) when you enter the hospital buildings and hand wash / hand sanitising stations must be utilised.**

## **Theatres / Recovery and Ward areas**

We have arranged for patient treatment to be as normal as possible, however we are taking steps to deliver planned surgery in protected areas. This means that we are trying to keep patients who have self-isolated away from others who may not have done so.

Measures have been taken in the operating theatres and wards to reduce the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. This includes staff wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like face masks and eye protectors, aprons, gowns, and gloves. We recognise that this can be slightly worrying or intimidating, but behind the PPE are our usual friendly colleagues.

Additional cleaning procedures are in place within the theatre areas to maintain your safety whilst in the theatre environment. If you have any concerns about the cleanliness of the environment, staff processes for hand hygiene, or the use of PPE during your admission: please ask to speak with the department manager or matron.

## **Contact with family & friends during your hospital stay**

For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are tightening visiting restrictions, including for those patients who have undergone surgery. The reasoning behind this is to protect you, and other patients in the hospital.

That being said, we do recognise the importance of keeping in contact with family and friends during this difficult time. As such, we highly encourage the use of electronic devices and mobile phones, so that you can get in touch with loved ones without having to see them face-to-face.

We can support you in this regard, by setting up virtual visiting, whereby you can connect to your families and friends using a Trust android device. Newly introduced by the Trust's IT department, these video calls are coordinated by ward staff and help people get together remotely, without having to worry about the restrictions that would apply for an in-person visit.

In exceptional circumstances, the nurse in charge of the ward may also support face-to-face visiting for 1 hour a day, provided that the visitor is from your household and has been following the government COVID-19 guidance.



**These measures are to help reduce your risk of developing Covid-19 in the period after surgery. If you have any personal support needs please discuss these at pre-operative assessment.**

## **After your surgery**

Your clinical team will tell you how best to look after yourself when you are discharged home after surgery. They will also talk through any concerns you may have and answer your questions. They will recommend you self-isolate and stay at home (other than for medical needs) after your surgery. If you are at high risk in relation to COVID-19, you will be advised to self-isolate for a longer period than someone who is not at high risk. Contact details will be provided to you upon discharge should you have any further concerns relating to your surgery once you are at home.



[www.dbth.nhs.uk](http://www.dbth.nhs.uk)

---