



## Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself whilst waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

## Plastic Surgery: Breast Reconstruction Surgery Inc. DIEP free flap reconstruction (deep inferior epigastric perforator)

Breast reconstruction is surgery to make a new breast after removal of the breast or part of the breast. To find out about the different types of reconstruction available to you after surgery for breast cancer please contact your breast team.

If you have any specific concerns about your reconstruction surgery, you are advised to contact your breast reconstruction nurse or breast team for support.

## Guidance for Patients

### How you can support yourself while you wait for your procedure

There are things you can do whilst you wait for your procedure to make you sure you are as healthy and strong as you can be. This will increase your chances of a better recovery. In the time leading up to your procedure, be sure to take good care of yourself by taking a few smart steps. This can help you avoid complications. Follow these simple tips to ensure the best possible outcome and prepare for a successful recovery.

### Take Your Medication

You will be advised to continue with your normal medications, but you may be asked to stop some medications before your procedure, your clinician or pre-operative nurse will provide you with this information.

### Keep Moving

Exercise regularly. Among other benefits, better fitness levels reduce complications when having any procedure. This allows you to leave hospital and return to your normal quality of life more quickly. Keeping an active lifestyle is good for your health and if you are normally an active person it is important to keep that up before your procedure. People with low activity levels can improve their fitness levels within as little as 4 weeks prior to their procedure. This gives you an opportunity to get fitter before your procedure and improve your chances of a better and quicker recovery.

# My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

## Improve Your Health

Stick to healthy foods - Your body needs good nutrition to fight infection and heal following your procedure.

Avoid dehydration - Drink at least six-eight glasses of fluid per day, preferably water.

Avoid shaving or waxing - This increases the risk of getting a wound infection. If hair needs to be removed for your procedure, it will be done in the hospital.

Avoid constipation - Drink plenty of fluids and increase the amount of fibre in your diet. If this does not help you can attend your local pharmacy for over-the-counter remedies.

## Smoking

If you are coming into hospital for a procedure, and you are a smoker, we strongly advise you to stop smoking as soon as possible because this will help to improve wound healing, lung function and you will make the best possible recovery. Now is a better time than ever to stop smoking. Smoking before procedure puts you at a higher risk for post-operative heart attacks, stroke, blood clots, pneumonia and even death.

<https://www.sthk.nhs.uk/smokefree>

## Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on your body but importantly it can reduce your body's ability to heal.

Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits or lower to improve your body's ability to heal after your procedure.

## Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about having procedure, relaxation, mindfulness and breathing exercises can all help. Your GP can advise you on support in your local area.

[How to access mental health services - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

## What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you feel that there is a change in your condition please contact your breast nurse or Consultant's secretary through the hospital switchboard on 0151 426 1600.

If your condition suddenly worsens whilst you are waiting you should seek advice.

### Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

### Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.