

## 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 while waiting to attend the hospital for your treatment.

## Guidance for Patients

You might not realise that there are things you can do whilst you wait to increase your chances of a better recovery by being as healthy and as strong as you can be. 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.

You may find it helpful to watch this useful video from the Royal College of Anaesthetists for preparing for procedure:

[Preparing for surgery – Fitter Better Sooner | The Royal College of Anaesthetists \(rcoa.ac.uk\)](https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/Preparing-for-surgery)

Further advice can be found at:

[Preparing for your treatment - Sussex Health & Care Partnership \(sussexhealthandcare.uk\)](https://www.sussexhealthandcare.uk)

## Keep Moving

Exercise regularly. Among other benefits, better fitness levels reduce complications when having any type of 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.

Useful links:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/couch-to-5k-week-by-week/>

## 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. Smoking before procedure puts you at a higher risk for post-operative heart attacks, stroke, blood clots, pneumonia and even death. Now is a better time than ever to stop smoking.

Useful links:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/quit-smoking/nhs-stop-smoking-services-help-you-quit/>

[Quit Smoking - One You East Sussex](#)

## A Healthy Diet

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health. A healthy diet before and after your procedure can help your body to heal.

Useful links:

[Eat well - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight prior to your treatment can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. In addition it can help to:

- lower your blood pressure
- improve your blood sugar level
- reduce pain in your joints
- reduce your risk of blood clots after surgery
- reduce your risk of wound infections after surgery
- allow you to exercise more easily.

Useful links:

[Lose weight - Better Health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## 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.

Useful links:

[Alcohol units - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Managing Medical Conditions

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

**High blood pressure.** In 90% of patients with high blood pressure (BP) the cause is unknown. A high BP results in the heart having to use more energy in pumping blood around the body. It is important to have your BP checked regularly by your GP or Practice Nurse. Have your blood pressure checked at your surgery well ahead of your operation. If your BP is high your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation.

**Diabetes.** Good control of diabetes can reduce the risk of problems. Aim for HbA1c levels of around 48 mmol/mol (6.5%) and ask for advice from your GP and your diabetes consultant or nurse specialist.

**Dental health.** If you have loose teeth or crowns a visit to the dentist before your procedure may reduce the risk of damage to your teeth during an operation.

**Other health conditions.** If you have any other long-term medical problems, consider asking your GP or nurse for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be.

## 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.

Useful Links:

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

[Emotional wellbeing and mental health - Sussex Health & Care Partnership \(sussexhealthandcare.uk\)](https://sussexhealthandcare.uk)

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

### Life Threatening Emergencies

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

### 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. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk). The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

### GP surgeries are still open

If you experience an increase in pain or a deterioration of your symptoms you should, in the first instance, contact your General Practitioner for review and advice. GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

## Contact Us

If you feel that you need to get in contact with us to discuss issues impacting your planned procedure please use the following contact details in the first instance:

**Email:** [esh-tr.palsh@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.palsh@nhs.net)

**Telephone:** 0300 131 5309 / 0300 131 4784

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service provides confidential, on-the-spot advice and support, helping you to sort out any concerns you may have about the care we provide, guiding you through the different advice and support.

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service aims to:

- Advise and support patients, their families and carers.
- Provide information on NHS services.
- Listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries.
- Help sort out problems quickly on your behalf.

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