Queen Victoria Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Ear, Nose and Throat

Preparing for your treatment

It is a good idea to prepare your body and mind prior to any treatment

In the time before your treatment, you can take simple steps to help improve your physical and mental health. This can help to reduce your risk of complications from any surgery and improve your wellbeing now and during your recovery. Think of this as 'Prehabilitation'.

Research shows that people who keep mentally or physically active feel happier and healthier. Maintaining and improve your overall wellbeing will lead to a faster recovery if you require surgery.

It is a good idea to make the most of the time before you see your specialist by stopping smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, getting fitter and drinking less alcohol. Support is available to help you and can be found in the pages in this section.

Improving your wellbeing

Smoking

Stopping smoking is hard, but the good news is that quitting or cutting down shortly before treatment can improve wound healing and lung function and reduce the length of any stay in hospital. Preparing for surgery offers a real opportunity to commit to stopping smoking.

Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight 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.

Exercise

Your heart and lungs have to work harder after an operation to help the body to heal. If you are already active, they will be used to this. While you are waiting for your operation, try and increase your activity levels.

Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, gardening, or playing with your children are all helpful. Try to do any activity which makes you feel out of breath at least three times per week, but always check with your doctor first what type of exercise is most appropriate for you. Activities that improve your strength and balance will also be useful for your recovery.

Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal.

Managing medical conditions

Many medical conditions can affect recovery from surgery. It is important to make sure any known conditions are controlled as well as possible ahead of your surgery.

You can also book in for a general health check at your GP surgery if you are between 40 and 74 years old.

Diabetes

Good control of your blood sugar is really important to reduce your risk of infections after surgery. Think about your diet and weight. Talk to your diabetes nurse or team early to see if they need to make any changes to your treatment.

Blood pressure

Blood pressure should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke. Sometimes operations may be delayed if it is too high.

Have your blood pressure checked at your surgery well ahead of your operation – some GP surgeries have automated machines so you can pop in any time. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation.

Anaemia (low blood count)

If you have been bleeding or have a chronic medical condition, a blood test can check whether you are anaemic. If you are, you should talk to your GP about treatment to improve your blood count before surgery.

Treating your anaemia before surgery reduces the chance of you needing a blood transfusion. It will also help your recovery and make you feel less tired after your surgery.

Heart, lung, and other medical problems

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.

Dental health

If you have loose teeth or crowns, a visit to the dentist may reduce the risk of damage to your teeth during an operation.

COVID-19 vaccination

If you are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination, it is recommended that you have this prior to attending hospital appointments or surgery.

To find out if you are eligible, visit the NHS COVID-19 vaccination pages.

If you are eligible and would like to book your vaccination appointment, visit the national booking service.

For more information and advice, you can watch a helpful video from the Royal College of Anaesthetists - Preparing for surgery: Fitter Better Sooner.

Healthy living

It's normal to feel anxious about treatment - improving your health beforehand can help you recover

It's normal to feel anxious about medical treatment, particularly if you require surgery. People who are able to improve their health and activity levels recover more quickly after treatment.

We all have parts of our lives that we would like to change, from stopping smoking to achieving and maintaining a healthier weight. The good news is that, as well as improving your health in the long term, making those changes ahead of your treatment can reduce your risk of a range of complications and can also help you recover more quickly from any surgery.

Local health and wellbeing services

Your local health and wellbeing service offer free, tailored support for a longer, healthier and happier life - including motivational support and techniques to help you make simple changes to the parts of your life you would like to change. Find out more by visiting your local service:

- West Sussex
- Brighton and Hove - call **01273 296 580**, Monday-Friday 09:00-17:00 (standard call charges apply)
- East Sussex - call **01323 404600**, Monday-Friday 09:00-17:00 (standard call charges apply)

National support

- Fitter Better Sooner - information and advice on how to prepare to get ready for surgery
- The NHS website has lots of free tools and support to help with:
  - Getting active
  - Losing weight
  - Quitting smoking
  - Drinking less

Emotional wellbeing and mental health

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

People sometimes feel worried or anxious about an appointment or treatment - this is perfectly normal

It is perfectly normal to feel anxious about an appointment or treatment. For some people with existing mental health conditions this could get worse. It is estimated that one in four of us will experience mental health problems during our lives.

If you feel you may be struggling with your mental health it can be daunting and scary to seek help. We have put together a collection of resources and services to help you help yourself.

National services

- NHS mental health pages - information and support for your mental health
- Every Mind Matters - advice and tips for looking after your mental health and wellbeing
- Mind - a charity providing advice and support
- Rethink - factsheets and access to an advisory service
- Headspace - an app to help you become less stressed, more resilient and happier
- Calm Harm - an app providing support and guidance for those struggling with self harm
- SAM - an app to help you understand and manage anxiety

Local services

- Sussex Mental Healthline - **0800 0309 500,** 24/7 (calls are free from mobiles and landline numbers). Dial **0300 5000 101** for Text Relay calls and New Generation Text calls for hearing and speech impaired callers (call costs may apply). A telephone interpreter can be arranged by calling the helpline.

Brighton & Hove:

- Brighton and Hove Council - links to mental health services and resources
- Brighton & Hove Wellbeing Service - an NHS community-based collaboration to support people from age 4 years upwards who have mild to moderate depression and anxiety. For non-emergency calls or enquiries call **0300 002 0060** Monday-Friday, 09:00-17:00 (call costs may apply).

East Sussex:

- Health in Mind - a free NHS service for anyone experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties such as stress, anxiety, and depression. Non-urgent call and enquiries can be made to **0300 00 30 130** Monday-Friday 09:00-17:00 (call costs may apply).
- East Sussex Council - a directory of local mental health services

West Sussex:

- West Sussex Mind - advice and support. Calls can be made to **0300 303 5652**, Monday-Friday, 10:00-16:00 (call costs may apply).
- Time To Talk - talking therapies for a wide range of general and diagnosed mental health concerns.

Managing pain

You may be in pain or discomfort while you are waiting for an appointment or treatment

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

We know that some people will be in pain while they are waiting for an appointment or treatment. Pain can have a huge impact on our lives; from how we move, to our mood and sleep. Frustratingly pain can affect what matters most to us in life; from our relationships with family and friends, to our ability to work or take part in hobbies

Everyone's pain experience is different, and everyone has different goals they would like to work towards. Having better knowledge around your condition can help you increase your confidence when making decisions around what to change and how to take control back of your life.

Below are some information and resources for managing pain:

- How to get help for your pain - NHS
- NHS Self-help guide - Managing Chronic Pain
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
- Persistent Pain - Sussex MSK Partnership - information, advice and guidance to support better emotional and physical wellbeing while living with pain.
- Live Well with Pain - website for people who are living with persistent pain, information, advice and guidance about living well with pain.

Money worries

Waiting for your treatment could be affecting your earnings

Waiting for an appointment or treatment could affect how many hours you are able to work, and how much you are earning.

If you are struggling to pay bills, need help with a benefits issue, or are concerned about growing debt, there is free, confidential support and advice available.

- Benefit Calculator - Turn2Us
- Free Debt Advice - Step change
- NHS - Low income Scheme
- Access to Work - Employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work

Your local Citizens Advice can help you find a way forward, whatever the problem. They offer confidential information and advice to assist people with legal, debt, consumer, housing, and other problems. Contact your local Citizens Advice office for more information and access to online support.

East Sussex:

- East Sussex Money & Housing - Support directory for services that can support you if you are struggling to pay bills, need help with a benefits issue, are a family on a low income, housing or homelessness or are concerned about growing debt.
- East Sussex Citizens Advice line: **03444 111 444** (call costs may apply)

Brighton and Hove:

- Money Works - Drop in and appointment sessions run across the city they offer practical help with making your money go further - **0800 988 7037** (calls are free of charge from mobile and landlines)
- Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice Line: **08082 787 815** (calls are free of charge from mobile and landlines)

West Sussex:

- West Sussex Connect To Support - Information and advice about financial support that may be available for you.
- West Sussex Citizens Advice line - **08082 787 969**, Monday-Friday 09:00-16:30 (calls are free of charge from mobile and landlines)

Support for carers

Carers can need help too - support is available

We know that there are many people who are caring for family and friends while they are waiting for a hospital appointment or treatment. This might include help with washing, dressing, shopping and taking medicines and also emotional support, ensuring that the person feels cared for and not alone.

Carers UK - Get support - Carers UK are a national charity that offers support for carers with employment, practical support, technology and equipment among other things

East Sussex:

- Caring for Someone - East Sussex County Council
- Care for the Carers East Sussex **Call: 01323 738390**

West Sussex:

- West Sussex County Council
- Carers Support - call: **0300 028 8888**

Brighton & Hove:

- Brighton and Hove City Council
- Carers Hub - call: **01273 977 000**
- Carers Centre - call: **01273 746 222**

You can find information about support and benefits for carers, including how to get a carer's assessment on the NHS website.

At your appointment

You will be asked some questions at your appointment - here are some examples to think about

If your appointment is to discuss the possibility of an operation or treatment, the healthcare professional you are seeing will talk to you about:

- How your condition is affecting your life and what matters to you
- What any tests, examinations or investigations about your condition have found
- The possible benefits of having an operation for you
- What risks there might be for you from having the operation
- How your operation would be carried out and whether you might need to stay overnight

- Whether there is a choice of providers for your treatment – sometimes it is possible to have your appointment more quickly by travelling out of your local area or if a private provider has been asked to deliver your care
- How long it might take you to recover and what you might need to do as part of your recovery. For example, attending appointments to have your dressings changed.
- Whether there are any activities that you won't be able to do for a while afterwards, for example certain kinds of work, household tasks like cleaning or doing the laundry, or driving
- What alternatives to having an operation there might be for you
- What would be likely to happen if you don't have any treatment

Your healthcare professional will also talk to you about how long you might have to wait for your operation and the things you can do to stay as well as possible while you are waiting.

- It is ok to ask questions. Your healthcare professional wants you to have all the information you need to help you to decide what the best plan and right treatment is for you. They will also take the time to make sure that you have understood all the information they have given you.
- It is your right to be involved as much or as little as you would like to be in decisions about your health and what treatment is right for you.
- You do not need to decide at your appointment. If you need more time to think about your options or to discuss these with family and friends, it is ok to ask for this.

Support while you wait

Contact Us

www.qvh.nhs.uk

General Enquiries Telephone Number: 01342 414000