

Respiratory – First Outpatients Appointment

Introduction

The COVID-19 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 are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

While you are waiting for further treatment it can sometimes feel like a long wait. The information and advice here is aimed at helping you manage that wait so you arrive for your appointment in the best possible physical and mental health.

The NHS has limited resources which means that we are unable to treat you as quickly as we would like. Each healthcare provider has to consider the type of help you need, how quickly you need treatment, the best course of action to help you and when and where you can be seen.

The process of sorting patients based on their individual needs is called prioritisation. The system of prioritisation is applied consistently across the NHS to help us to decide the order in which patients receive their treatment. This is essential to ensure that we provide care based on need. The system means that care is delivered in the fairest way possible.

Once a referral has been made from primary care to secondary care, the specialist team conduct assessments and then agree with you on the right course of action. At this stage, the urgency will be assessed. If you have a long-term health condition, for example, you may need treatment faster than someone without.

Guidance for Patients:

Stop smoking - ask at your local pharmacy for support with that or contact Livewell Dorset via their website (<https://www.livewelldorset.co.uk>) or freephone line 0800 840 1628

Information and support relating to respiratory conditions is available via the British Lung Foundation website on the following link:

<https://www.blf.org.uk>

This includes advice on managing your symptoms and health and we recommend you look at this resource

Ensure your vaccinations are up to date that you are eligible for e.g., covid, flu and pneumonia

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

Avoid triggers for your asthma or other respiratory condition such as allergies and smoking.

Make sure you are using your inhalers correctly and regularly - check with your local pharmacy or practice nurse. There are videos showing how to do it correctly on [Asthma + Lung UK | Asthma home](#)

Maintain exercise - many patients with breathing difficulties benefit from a treat called pulmonary rehabilitation which your doctor can refer you to, which involves seeing respiratory physios and nurses to improve your ability to exercise. Walking is an excellent type of exercise for lung conditions.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Contact your GP if your health has deteriorated since your referral to the hospital. Your GP will be able to reassess your condition and may seek to change the nature or urgency of your referral.

Many areas of Dorset have specialist respiratory community nurses who may be able to help with your condition, or reassess it, or discuss your case with a doctor. Ask at your GP surgery if there is such a nurse and how to contact them. Such nurses exist in Weymouth and Portland, the Bridport/ Lyme area and the Dorchester area.

Ask your doctor if you can have a "rescue pack" of antibiotics and steroids for your chest, guided by a self-management plan. Some people like to use phone Apps to help manage their asthma or COPD - these are available through your community team.

Try to avoid catching chest infections from your friends and family - avoid mixing with people who have colds, flu or COVID and try to use a mask when in crowded places.

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. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

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

Contact Us

If you are under the care of one of our Respiratory Specialist Nurses or community teams, please make contact with them via your regular communication channel in the first instance.

Please see the DCHFT Trust Website, there are a variety of patient information leaflets across most specialities (please see link below)

[Patient Information Leaflets dchft.nhs.uk](http://dchft.nhs.uk)

Lead Consultant: Dr Marianne Docherty, Respiratory Clinical Lead

Respiratory Admin Team Lead: Gillian Monger, 01305 255259

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The contents of this information has been reviewed and approved by the Senior Leadership Group of Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.