My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

Waiting for your first appointment (vascular surgery)

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always easy to let patients know when they will first be seen, although the information on this platform should give you an idea. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself to improve your overall health and wellbeing while waiting to attend your first appointment with Somerset Foundation Trust.

Most importantly, we encourage you to keep talking and to keep active. We need you to stay as healthy as you can both physically and mentally. There are online tools and resources listed below to help you keep active, and to support your mental health.

For help and support with losing weight visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/

For advice on eating well visit: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

For help and support with getting or keeping active visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/

For help and support with quitting smoking visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/ or, more locally: www.healthysomerset.co.uk/smokefree/

For help and support with drinking less alcohol visit: www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/

Managing pain

Some people are in pain or discomfort while they are waiting for a hospital appointment. You can find help and advice on managing ongoing pain on the NHS website at www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-get-nhs-help-for-your-pain/

If your pain is getting worse or you are finding it difficult to cope with, contact your GP or NHS 111.

Good mental health

People sometimes feel worried or anxious before a hospital appointment. This is perfectly normal. Some people might also find that an existing mental health condition gets worse. You can find helpful links for mental health support on the NHS website here: www.nhs.uk/mental-health/

Mental health charity Mind also has webpages about COVID and your wellbeing which can be accessed via their webpage: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression. You can self refer here: www.somersetft.nhs.uk/somerset-talking-therapies/refer-yourself/ where you can refer yourself online, print a self-referral form or call to book yourself in for an emotional Health Check: 0300 323 00 33.

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The content of this information has been reviewed and approved by the Integrated Quality Assurance Board of Somerset NHS Foundation Trust.

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Patients with caring responsibilities

Waiting for hospital appointments can be a particularly worrying time for patients who are also carers for others, as they need to think also about the loved one they are caring for and make alternative arrangements for them when it is time for them to attend hospital. Community Council for Somerset is contracted by Somerset County Council to run the Somerset Carers service. There are over 60,000 unpaid Carers in Somerset. If you regularly look after someone in an unpaid capacity, Somerset Carers can support you with advice and guidance at www.ccslovesomerset.org/somerset-carers/

What happens next?

You may already have a date for your first outpatient appointment that you will have received in the post, arranged on the telephone, or booked online. If something happens that means you are no longer able to attend your appointment it is very important to let us know so that we can rearrange it and offer your slot to someone else. The number for you to ring to do this will have been included in your confirmation letter.

If you do not yet have a date for your first appointment, please wait for us to contact you when we are ready to book you in. Most often this will be by letter, or sometimes you will receive a telephone call direct to book your appointment.

You will be sent confirmation of your appointment date, time, and location by letter so that you have a written record to refer to. Your appointment letter will also contain details about your specific appointment, including anything you need to bring with you, so please read it carefully, as well as any other information enclosed. Your appointment is most likely to be in the Vascular Outpatients Department at Musgrove Park Hospital in Taunton or at one of our community hospitals; this will be made clear on the letter.

We hope that you have found this information useful. Please remember that you can also talk to PALS who provide confidential advice and support to patients, families and their carers, and can provide information on the NHS and health related matters. Our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is here to help when you need advice, have concerns or don't know where to turn. For queries please contact pals@somersetft.nhs.uk or telephone 01823 343536.

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