

General Medicine: First Outpatient Appointment

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to provide some routine 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. We are working hard to get people seen as quickly as possible. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

You don't need to ring your GP, or the hospital for an update on waiting times because all the information is available on the My Planned Care website.

This guidance has been supported by clinicians who are responsible for your care to support and to help keep you well whilst waiting for your appointment.

The information provided is aimed at helping and supporting you before you attend your appointment, or before you have treatment. This will help ensure you are in the best possible physical and mental health. Maintaining and improving your overall wellbeing will also lead to faster recovery if you require further investigations or treatment.

Guidance for Patients

You will be contacted by the relevant team for your first appointment, whilst you are waiting please read this leaflet for more information on what you can do to help and support yourself.

How can you support yourself while you await your appointment?

There are things you can do whilst you wait for your appointment to make you sure you are as healthy and strong as you can be.

In the time leading up to your appointment, be sure to take good care of yourself by taking a few smart steps. These simple tips could ensure you are in the best possible health prior to your first appointment.

Keeping yourself healthy before your appointment is important. This document provides information on how you can achieve and maintain a healthy weight, get active, quit smoking and reduce your alcohol intake

There are steps you can take now to help make first appointment and any required treatment

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or investigations a success. The national [Better Health website](#) can also help you to kickstart your health and prepare you for a healthier, happier future.

Keep Moving

No matter how much you do, physical activity is good for your body and mind. Adults should aim to be active every day. If you are able to do so, a daily brisk walk can boost your energy, lift your mood and make everyday activities easier.

It is advised all adults should do some physical activity every day. The UK guidelines for adults aged 19-64 (including disabled adults, pregnant women and new mothers) is to try and be physically active every day if you are able to do so.

Try strengthening activities that work all the major muscles (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders and arms) at least twice a week if you are able to do so.

Reduce time spent sitting or lying down and break up long periods of not moving with some activity.

There is also guidance for exercise on the NHS website for older adults (65+) which can be accessed using the following link;

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-guidelines/physical-activity-guidelines-older-adults/>

Make sure that the type and intensity of your activity is appropriate for your level of fitness. Visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/ to find out more.

Maintaining a healthy weight

It is important to maintain a healthy weight or to lose weight if necessary. Please visit the NHS website for further information on maintaining a healthy weight and the benefits this can have on your overall health and wellbeing. This is particularly important when undergoing investigations or treatment.

You can download a [free NHS weight loss planning app](#) to help you start healthier eating habits, be more active and start losing weight.

Quit Smoking

If you're going into hospital for an appointment, investigation, or treatment, it is strongly advised that you stop smoking as soon as possible.

By quitting smoking you will give your body as much time as possible to repair itself and be beneficial. The best way to quit smoking is with a combination of personalised support and stop smoking aids, like nicotine replacement.

Free quitting services

With help, you're much more likely to quit smoking than if you use willpower alone. Visit [Make Smoking History](#) to get free access to the latest quitting aids, one-to-one advice and [support](#)

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[in your local area.](#)

You can also speak to your GP or local pharmacist for help to stop smoking. You can also keep motivated, monitor your health improvements and track how much money you save when you quit with the Smoke Free App.

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.

Cutting back on alcohol can be an effective way to improve your health, boost your energy, lose weight and save money. Any reduction in the amount you drink will be beneficial – and with the right support, it's easier than you think. There are some simple tips and tools to help you start cutting down today.

You can also download the free [Drink Free Days app](#).

Please seek medical advice before you stop drinking if you experience physical withdrawal symptoms such as shaking, sweating or feeling anxious until you have your first drink of the day. It can be dangerous to stop drinking too quickly without the correct help.

Find your [local alcohol support service now](#), or call [Drinkline on 0300 123 1110](#) for free. It is a confidential helpline for anyone who is concerned or requires support about their own or someone else's alcohol drinking.

Good Mental Health

Your mental wellbeing is just as important as your physical health.

In the time before your appointment you can take simple steps to improve your mental health.

Looking after your mental health

Having good mental health helps us relax, achieve and enjoy our lives more. We have expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health issues – We all have mental health, and life is full of ups and downs for everyone. Here you will find expert advice, practical tips and plenty of help and support if you're feeling stressed, anxious, low, struggling with relationships or sleep.

Here you will find some [general information on mental health issues](#) and some [top tips to improve your mental wellbeing](#).

There are also Apps available to help support your health, mental health and wellbeing:

- Please find tested and approved mental health apps provided by Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust [here](#).
- [Feeling anxious?](#)
- [Feeling stressed?](#)
- [Feeling low?](#)

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- [Trouble sleeping?](#)

Your appointment

Please follow the advice and guidance available on the South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust website regarding your appointment.

<https://www.southtees.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/appointments/>

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you need urgent medical attention but it is not a life-threatening situation, you should first call 111. If you think life is at risk, you should call 999.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it is 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 life threatening Symptoms such as:

- Severe bleeding,
- Breathing difficulties
- Chest pains

Please dial 999.