

## Respiratory: 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 help and support yourself whilst you are waiting for your first Respiratory appointment. 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.

You don't need to ring your GP, or the respiratory service 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.

### Guidance for Patients

You will be contacted by the respiratory team for your first appointment, whilst you are waiting for your appointment please read the information that is provided in this leaflet for more information on what can be done to help and support yourself.

### How can you support yourself whilst you await your respiratory appointment?

There are things you can do whilst you are waiting 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. Follow these simple tips to ensure you are in the best possible health prior to your first appointment.

### Take Your Medication

Whilst waiting for your hospital treatment continue to follow medical advice and continue to take any medications as prescribed.

Make a list of any medicines you are taking, including prescriptions, medicines you've

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bought yourself or any alternative treatments and take this along to any appointments you have.

If you need to stop any medication before any investigations, you will be given clear instructions by the respiratory team. Please do not stop or change any medications yourself.

If you have any queries please don't hesitate to get in touch with the respiratory team.

## Lifestyle

Keeping yourself healthy before your appointment is important. This document provides information on how you can 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 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.

The UK guidelines for adults aged 19-64yrs (including disabled adults, pregnant women and new mothers) are 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 if you are able to do so.

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

## Smoking

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 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,

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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

It's important during this time to take care of your mind as well as your body. You might be feeling down, worried or anxious while you wait for your appointment.

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?](#)
- [Trouble sleeping?](#)

Other local support services can be found on [the NHS website](#)

### General information:

### 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/>

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

This information is designed to help you manage your symptoms and help you try to stay in the best possible health whilst you await your appointment. It is however possible that some of your symptoms may get worse while you are waiting for your appointment.

There are some things to look out for that would indicate you should seek medical help:

1. severe shortness of breath
2. rapid, shallow breathing
3. tiredness, drowsiness or confusion
4. feeling faint

If you experience any of these issues we would recommend seeking urgent medical attention.

Alternatively, you can contact your GP practice. Whilst your GP does not have access to the hospital waiting list to get you seen sooner, if your condition is getting worse they can assess you, give advice and can contact the hospital on your behalf if necessary.

For any routine queries, please contact your hospital respiratory team. The number and email should be on your last hospital appointment letter.

## 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](http://www.nhs.uk). The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.