



Pain Management: 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. 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 caring for you 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 procedure.

Pain Management:

The pain clinic aims to offer advice and treatment to those living with persistent long-term pain. The service is supported by a MDT including medical, nursing, pharmacy, and physiotherapy support. South Tees specialises in abdominal and pelvic pain, cancer Pain, headache, complex regional pain syndrome, paediatric pain and neuromodulation including spinal cord stimulation and intrathecal drug delivery systems. Within your first appointment a management plan will be agreed with yourself and the MDT that's specific for your needs. The pain management service is provided across James Cook University Hospital, Friarage Hospital Northallerton, and Whitby Hospital sites.

Guidance for Patients

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

The pain management service offers a range of procedures including nerve root blocks, occipital and peripheral nerve injections and intrathecal drug pumps.

Following your appointment, you may be referred for a surgical procedure if deemed appropriate by the pain management team.

How can you support yourself whilst you await your procedure?

In the time leading up to your procedure, be sure to take good care of yourself by taking a few smart steps. This can help you avoid complications. Follow these simple tips to ensure the best possible outcome and prepare for a successful recovery.

Take Your Medication

You will be advised to continue with your normal medications, but you may be advised to stop some medications before your procedure, your clinician or pre-operative nurse will provide you with this information and advise accordingly. Please do not stop or change any medications yourself.

Lifestyle

We would encourage anyone waiting for surgery to lose some weight if necessary and to stop smoking. These measures are known to lower risk of complications following surgery.

Losing weight is not about getting it right – it's about getting started. Making small, simple changes can really help you shed the pounds.

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

We would encourage anyone waiting for surgery to stop 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](#)

Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on your body but importantly it can reduce your body's ability to heal. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits or lower to improve your ability to heal after your procedure.

Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE) before procedure

There are natural ways and lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of developing blood clots, these include

- **Staying active:** make a point of moving every 30-60 minutes to ensure you keep

your blood flowing

- **Regular exercise** – simply walking for 30 minutes a day is a great way to keep your circulation moving
- **Maintain a healthy weight**
- **Keep hydrated.**

Your doctor will assess your risk of developing a blood clot when you come into hospital and order a treatment plan to minimise your risk. This may include prescribed medications before or after procedure, or when you go home, to prevent blood clots.

Keep Moving

Exercise regularly. Among other benefits, better fitness levels reduce complications when having any procedure. This allows you to leave hospital and return to your normal quality of life more quickly. Keeping an active lifestyle is good for your health and if you are normally an active person it is important to keep that up before your procedure. People with low activity levels can improve their fitness levels within as little as 4 weeks. This gives you an opportunity to get fitter before your procedure and improve your chances of a better and quicker recovery.

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 surgery.

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:

Please watch this useful [video](#) 'Preparing for surgery – Fitter Better Sooner' from the Royal College of Anaesthetists which offers advice on preparing for a procedure if this is required.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

This information is designed to help you manage your symptoms and stay in the best possible health whilst you wait for your appointment. It is however possible that some of your symptoms may get worse while you are waiting. We recommend you contact your GP practice if symptoms do get worse. Whilst your GP does not have access to the hospital waiting list to get you seen sooner, if you feel your condition is getting worse they can assess you, give advice and can contact the hospital on your behalf if necessary.

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.