

Cardiology & Cardiothoracic Surgery: First 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 do not 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 is supported by clinicians who are responsible for your care. It is designed to help and support you before you attend your appointment, or before if you require a specific 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 your Hospital Trust for your first appointment. Whilst you are waiting, do please read this leaflet for more information on what can be done to support and look after yourself.

If you have any specific concerns about your symptoms while you wait for your appointment you are advised to initially contact your GP for support.

How can you support yourself while you await your appointment?

There are things you can do whilst you wait for your appointment to make sure you are as healthy and strong as you can be. This will increase your chances of a better recovery if you go on to require a specific treatment following an outpatient appointment.

Follow these simple tips to ensure the best possible outcome and prepare for a successful recovery.

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

Take Your Medication

Whilst waiting for your hospital appointment 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 bought yourself or any alternative treatments and take this along to any appointments you have.

If your specialist recommends you need a procedure following your first appointment, your clinician or pre-operative nurse will give clear instructions if you need to stop or change any of your medication.

Please do not stop or change any medications yourself.

Improve Your Health

Eat healthy foods - your body needs good nutrition to fight infection and recover following any procedure you may require.

Avoid dehydration

Avoid constipation - drink plenty of fluids and increase the amount of fibre in your diet. If this does not help you can attend your local pharmacy for over-the-counter remedies.

Smoking

We strongly advise you to stop smoking. This has numerous health benefits and lowers your risk of complications. If you are advised by your specialist that an operation is required, stopping smoking also reduces the risk of post-operative heart attacks, stroke, blood clots and respiratory complications.

You are more likely to successfully stop smoking with specific help than by will power 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 has 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 to improve your ability to heal after any procedure you may require.

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

Version 1: April 2022 NENC DRAFT V1

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

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 for a procedure and will order a treatment plan to minimise your risk. This may include prescribed medications before and after your procedure, including after your discharge from hospital this is to help reduce the risk of you developing blood clots.

Keep Moving

Exercise regularly. Improved fitness levels reduce the risk of 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. If you are normally an active person, it is important to keep this 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 any procedure you may require and improves your chances of a better and quicker recovery.

Use this tool to [find out your BMI](#) . If your BMI is high, you need to consider trying to lose some weight in order to optimise your outcome following surgery.

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

Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about seeing a specialist or waiting for a procedure. Relaxation, mindfulness and breathing exercises can be beneficial and help you. It is important that you ask for help if you feel you need it. Your GP practice can advise you on support in your local area. Please keep in touch with your GP or mental health professional if you are already under their care for depression or anxiety.

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

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

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?](#)

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.

There is also some useful information available on North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System for information about [Who we are | North East and North Cumbria ICS](#)

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 are awaiting your appointment. It is however possible that your symptoms may get worse while you are waiting.

There are some things to look out for which would indicate you should seek medical help.

- If your pain gets worse to the point that it is unmanageable with the pain relief suggested by the pharmacist or doctor, and you are struggling to cope with it.

If you experience any of these issues, we recommend getting in touch with your GP in the first instance. Whilst your GP does not have access to the hospital waiting list to get you seen sooner, your GP can make a further assessment of you, give advice and can contact the hospital on your behalf if required.

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.

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

Life Threatening Emergencies

For life threatening Symptoms such as:

- Severe bleeding,
- Breathing difficulties
- Chest pains

Please dial 999.

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit www.nhs.uk