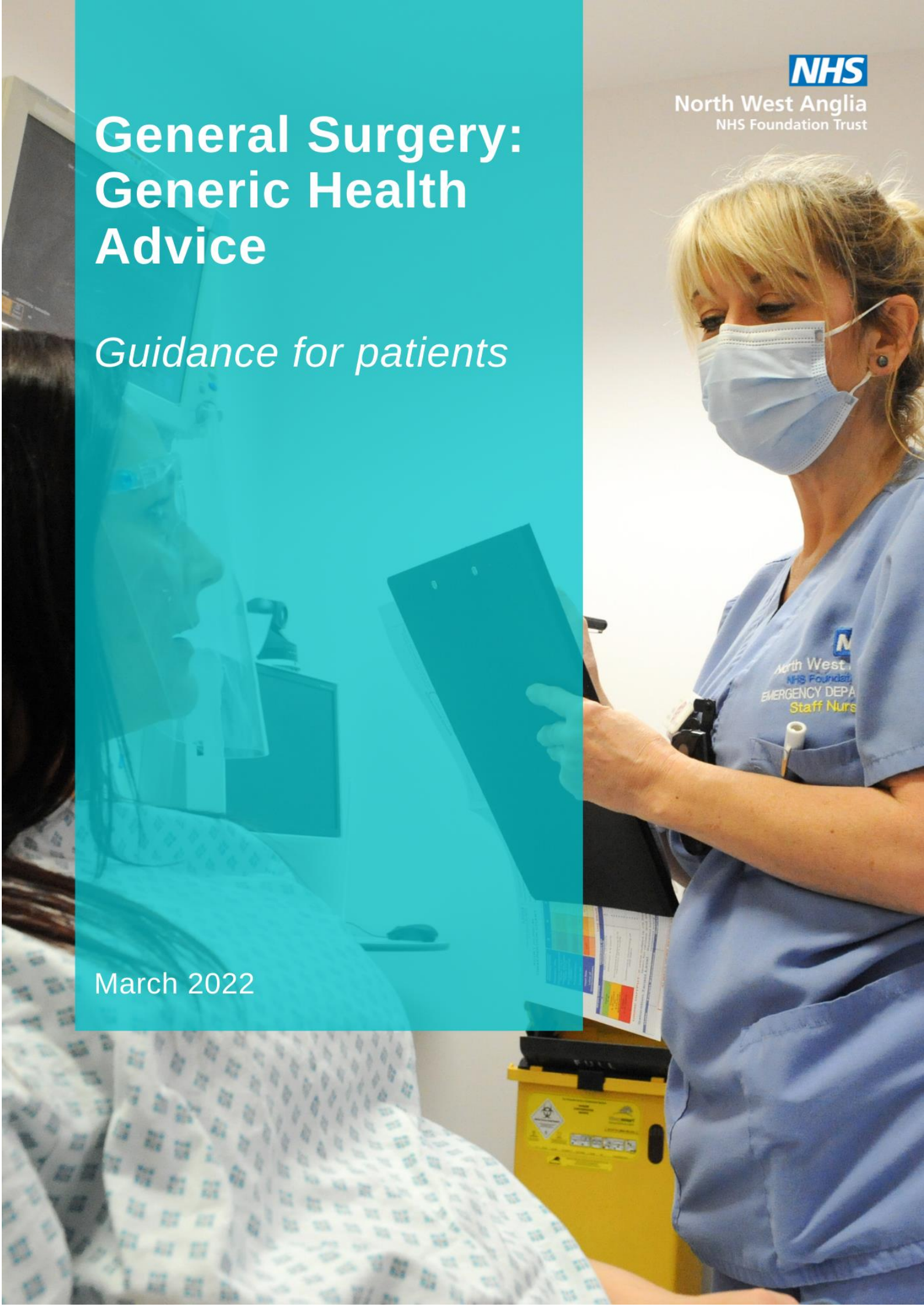


General Surgery: Generic Health Advice

Guidance for patients

March 2022



General Surgery (Generic Health Advice)

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to provide routine elective 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. The guidance has been reviewed by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

In preparation for an upcoming procedure, you might not realise that there are things you can do in the days or weeks before to increase your chances of a better recovery by being as healthy and as strong as you can be. 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.

Guidance for Patients

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.

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 prior to their procedure. This gives you an opportunity to get fitter before your procedure and improve your chances of a better and quicker recovery. Couch to 5K: week by week -NHS (www.nhs.uk).

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:

- Stay 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 DVT and PE when you come into hospital and order a treatment plan. This may include prescribed medications before or after procedure, or when you go home, to prevent blood clots.

Improve Your Health

- Stick to healthy foods. Your body needs good nutrition to fight infection and heal following your procedure.
- Avoid dehydration. Drink at least six-eight glasses of fluid per day, preferably water.
- Avoid shaving or waxing. This increases the risk of getting a wound infection. If hair needs to be removed for your procedure, it will be done in the hospital.
- 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

If you are coming into hospital for a procedure, and you are a smoker, we strongly advise you to stop smoking as soon as possible because this will help to improve wound healing, lung function and you will make the best possible recovery. Now is a better time than ever to stop smoking. Smoking before procedure puts you at a higher risk for post-operative heart attacks, stroke, blood clots, pneumonia and even death. <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/health-wirral/health-wellbeing/get-smokefree>

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 body's ability to heal after your procedure. <https://www.wuth.nhs.uk/our-departments/a-z-of-departments/substance-misuse-services/>

Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about having procedure, relaxation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises can all help. Your GP procedure can advise you on support in your local area. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>

Please watch this useful video from the Royal College of Anaesthetists for preparing for procedure '*fitter, better, sooner*'. <https://www.rcoa.ac.uk/patient-information/preparing-procedure-fitter-better-sooner/fitter-better-sooner-general-information>

Age UK - <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/conditions-illnesses/arthritis/>

Age UK provides information on activities and exercise class held by local Age UK representatives. They also signpost to advice on healthy eating options and maintaining a healthy weight especially important if you are being considered for surgery, and some of the options available to get help in the home (<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/arranging-care/homecare/>)

Healthy eating and being active

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- One You Eat Better (website) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.
- Better Health -Get Active (website) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition

Find out your BMI

You can get help to lead a healthier lifestyle. If it's too high, sign up for a programme that will help you lose weight.

The NHS 12-week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments