

UPPER GASTROINTESTINAL SURGERY – Removal of Gall Bladder

Introduction

We have been working hard to recover elective services as quickly as possible, transforming and integrating services and how we deliver care across Somerset, following our recent merger. 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 written in consultation with clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Guidance for Patients

Whilst you are waiting for your gall bladder to be removed you should try to avoid eating fat. To help you cut the total amount of fat in your diet you can:

- compare food labels when you shop so you can choose foods that are lower in fat
- choose lower-fat or reduced-fat dairy products or dairy alternatives
- grill, bake, poach or steam food rather than frying or roasting
- measure oil with a teaspoon to control the amount you use, or use an oil spray
- trim visible fat and take the skin off meat and poultry before cooking it
- choose leaner cuts of meat that are lower in fat, such as turkey breast and reduced-fat mince
- make your meat stews and curries go further by adding vegetables and beans
- try reduced-fat spreads, such as spreads based on olive or sunflower oils

It is important that while you are waiting for your surgery you also remain as active and as medically fit as possible. That will help you get the best results in the long term. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this regularly reviewed at your GP surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker or drink heavily, it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping.

The NHS website has lots of tools and support to help with the above, all of which are good for your health generally, but if you are due to have an operation, they can also help you to recover more quickly from it.

For help and support with losing weight: www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/

For advice on eating well: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/

For help and support with getting or keeping active: www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/

More locally, Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) have lots of information for adults, children and young people on how to be more active: [Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership - Somerset Activity & Sports Partnership \(sasp.co.uk\)](http://sasp.co.uk)

For older people Age UK offer a range of activities and exercise classes. You can find out about any classes in your local area on the Age UK website: Age UK | The UK's leading charity helping every older person who needs us

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For help and support with quitting smoking: www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/

For help and support with drinking less alcohol: www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/

Take your medication

Continue taking your medication while waiting for your surgery, as directed by your GP and hospital specialist. When they contact you, remember to inform the pre-op assessment team of all medicines, vitamins, herbal remedies and supplements you take, so that they can give you clear information on whether you should stop taking your usual medicines before going into hospital.

Managing pain

Some people are in pain or discomfort while they are waiting for a hospital appointment or treatment. You can find help and advice on managing ongoing pain on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/how-to-get-nhs-help-for-your-pain/

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy also has helpful information on managing pain: www.csp.org.uk/public-patient

If your pain is getting worse or you are finding it difficult to cope with, contact your GP or NHS 111.

Good mental health

People sometimes feel worried or anxious before a hospital appointment or treatment. This is perfectly normal. Some people might also find that an existing mental health condition gets worse, so looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical health. You can find helpful links for mental health support on the NHS website: www.nhs.uk/mental-health/

Mental health charity Mind also has webpages about COVID-19 and your wellbeing: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing

Talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression. You can self refer here: [Online Referral - Talking Therapies - Somerset NHS Foundation Trust \(somersetft.nhs.uk\)](http://www.somersetft.nhs.uk/online-referral-talking-therapies)

Patients with caring responsibilities

Waiting for hospital treatment can be a particularly worrying time for patients who are also carers for others, as they need to think also about the loved one they are caring for and make alternative arrangements for them when it is time for them to attend hospital. The Community Council for Somerset is contracted by Somerset County Council to run the Somerset Carers service. There are over 60,000 unpaid carers in Somerset. If you regularly look after someone in an unpaid capacity, Somerset Carers can support you with advice and guidance: www.ccslovesomerset.org/somerset-carers/

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your condition suddenly worsens whilst you are waiting you should seek medical advice.

If you develop a high temperature or notice your eyes or skin becoming yellow, you should get health advice urgently from your GP.

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If your episodes of pain are getting longer, more frequent or are provoked more easily, please contact us on the numbers outlined below in the 'Contact Us' section.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's 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 something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

Contact Us

If you are having your surgery at Musgrove Park Hospital, please contact:

Email: BariatricsandupperGIsecretaries@SomersetFT.nhs.uk Telephone: 01823 342100

If you are having your surgery at Yeovil Hospital, please contact:

The General Surgery booking officer on 01935 384732