



Fusion of Toe Joint

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to know 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 by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Guidance for Patients

It is important that while you are waiting for your outpatient appointment or surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your Doctor's surgery to make sure it remains well controlled.

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 it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping.

Keeping As Healthy As Possible Whilst You Wait Is The Most Important Thing You Can Do

In Mid and South Essex, we have developed comprehensive and free services that can help you to remain as healthy as you can or even improve your health and wellbeing whilst you wait.

Ensuring that you play your part in being as healthy as you can be will give you the best treatment outcomes when you see your consultant and team.

You may find the following resources helpful:

Versus Arthritis - <https://www.versusarthritis.org/>

Versus Arthritis is an arthritis charity, especially geared towards helping individuals manage differing forms of arthritis. They have useful online exercise programmes especially designed for those with painful arthritic conditions that will help maintain flexibility. They also offer self-help tips for managing arthritic pain.

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, as well as some of the options available to get help in the home (<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/arranging-care/homecare/>)

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NHS Website - [Living with arthritis](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/arthritis/living-with/) - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/arthritis/living-with/>

This website carries useful information for those still at work and dealing with the impact of arthritis and useful links to financial and local government websites that may be able to offer you further support in your home.

Active Essex - <https://www.activeessex.org/find-your-active/>

Active Essex is the Physical Activity and Sport Partnership for Essex, Southend, and Thurrock

The Charter Society of Physiotherapy - [Managing your bone, joint or muscle pain](#)

Resources to self-manage musculoskeletal conditions from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

Public Health England Guidance - [Productive healthy ageing and musculoskeletal \(MSK\) health](#)

A resource for health professionals and local authorities making the case for action to support healthy productive later life.

Preparing Well with the Essex Wellbeing Service and partners

Whilst you await your appointment you can access the Essex Wellbeing Service who are our single point of call for all of the wellbeing and health improvement services across Mid and South Essex.

The team will provide you with practical, emotional, health and wellbeing advice support and signpost you to your locally services. They help Mid and South Essex residents to lead their best possible life, maximising their emotional and physical health.

The friendly team will talk to you about your health and any areas that you would like to improve for example your weight, or perhaps you want to stop smoking and be more active. The team will also link you into practical advice about debt management, reducing stress and anxiety and how to feel less isolated in the community. The team will connect you in quickly and easily with local free services that are available to you.

Whilst we have provided you with a lot of information here, to talk through your specific health and wellbeing needs and for more information, please call 0300 303 998 or go on the website

<https://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk/>

The team are keen to hear from you.

Note: this service does not offer urgent or clinical support

Take Your Medication

Medicines are widely used by the NHS to prevent and treat poor health. When medicines are not taken or used properly, it can lead to poor and worsening health and wellbeing. Before taking any medication, carefully read all the instructions on the label and ask your doctor or pharmacist for help if you are not sure how to take them.

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When it comes to getting the best from our medicines, we all need to know: it's OK to ask.

<https://meandmymedicines.org.uk/>

You need to know:

- ✓ when to take them
- ✓ what you should and shouldn't take them with – such as alcohol or food
- ✓ any side effects, both on its own or in combination with any other medication you're taking

What can I do?

- ✓ Learn about your medication
- ✓ Organise and plan your medication
- ✓ Take your medication as prescribed

Read the written instructions that accompany your medication and keep in one place – in a drawer or folder – so that you know where to find them. You can also [find information about prescription medication](#) using the electronic Medicines Compendium.

Answers to common question about medicines can be found here:

<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/medicines/>

Finding a Pharmacy near you

You can find a pharmacy near you and their opening times by searching on [Find a pharmacy](#)

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

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.

What if my health has deteriorated in relation to the condition that I am waiting to be treated for at the hospital?

If you have already booked or attended an outpatient appointment at the hospital and your condition has deteriorated contact the relevant hospital and department:

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Basildon University Hospital

Switchboard: **01268 524900**

Broomfield Hospital

Switchboard: **01245 362000**

Southend University Hospital

Switchboard: **01702 435555**

Orsett Hospital

Switchboard: **01268 524900**

St Peter's Hospital

Switchboard: **01621 725323**

Braintree Community Hospital

Switchboard: **01376 555900**

If you do not yet have an appointment with the hospital and your condition has deteriorated contact

Referral Support Service on 0300 123 0771 (local call rate) between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and a member of the team will support you with your enquiries

Note: this service does not offer urgent or clinical support, however they will direct you to who you need to speak with about your condition

General Health Advice

Like GPs, community pharmacists are part of the NHS family. Many community pharmacies are open long hours when other health care professionals are unavailable, with immediate access to a pharmacist for help and advice. Pharmacists are able to assess the clinical needs of patients and make appropriate referrals to other NHS services and healthcare professionals when appropriate. GP surgeries are open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. GP practices continue to make

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best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

My Planned Care Enquiries -Contact Us

If you have a query about your hospital appointment or referral, please call the

Referral Support Service on: 0300 123 0771(local call rate). Lines open Monday - Friday 8am- 6pm

Patient advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If there is a problem, the best way to get it resolved is usually to tell someone there and then.

- On a ward, talk to the sister or charge nurse on duty.
- In a clinic/department, talk to the receptionist or a member of staff.

If you want to talk to a senior manager or to someone who has not been directly involved in your care and treatment, we can usually arrange this straight away during office hours. You can also ask to speak to a member of the PALS department.

If you need to contact the PALS services at our MSE hospitals, the contact details are below

[PALS \(Patient Advice and Liaison Service\) at MSE | Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust](#)