

General surgery

General surgery is surgery of the abdomen (tummy) and the oesophagus (gullet), small intestine, large intestine, liver, pancreas and gallbladder. General surgery also includes:

- diseases involving the skin, breast and soft tissue
- trauma to the abdomen
- hernias
- endoscopic procedures such as gastroscopy and colonoscopy

General surgery services provide a range of diagnostic tests, scans and examinations; this includes routine general surgery, specialist gastrointestinal surgery and emergency surgery.

General guidance for patients

During the pandemic we have had to focus on caring for patients with Covid-19 and other urgent and emergency conditions. Unfortunately, this has meant some patients are waiting longer than usual for planned care, including treatments, surgery and diagnostic procedures.

We are now seeing patients on our waiting list for planned care as quickly as possible and in order of clinical need – based on assessments managed by our clinical teams.

While you are waiting for your procedure your GP/Consultant may recommend an alternative management plan or treatment to deal with your symptoms. It is important that you consider these options in the short-term to support your wellbeing.

Your GP/Consultant will provide more information and specific instructions about your procedure.

How are we prioritising our waiting lists

We are continuing to increase our planned care capacity. We are also ensuring all patients referred to us – or on our waiting lists – are prioritised by clinicians according to their clinical need.

Anyone who is on an urgent pathway for a possible cancer diagnosis continues to be seen as quickly as possible, almost all within two weeks.

For planned surgery, we use the Royal College of Surgeon's prioritisation approach:

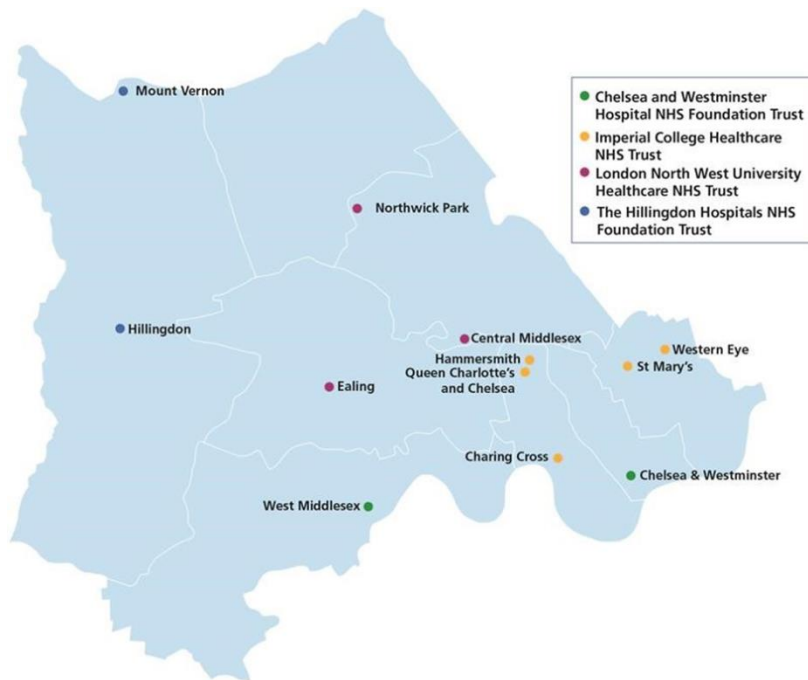
- **Priority level 1** - Surgery is needed within 72 hours
- **Priority level 2** - Surgery can safely wait for up to four weeks
- **Priority level 3** - Surgery can safely wait for up to three months
- **Priority level 4** - Surgery can safely wait for more than three months.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have only performed the most time-critical surgery. We are now able to provide more capacity for priority 3 and priority 4 patients and so our ability to treat patients within reasonable timescales will improve. However, it will take some time to bring down our waiting times – the latest waiting time performance is published on this website

How we are reducing waiting times – and how might it affect your care?

Across north west London our NHS hospitals are working closely together to provide better care for patients in the long-term. Some of these initiatives are as follows

- **Having a single view of waiting times:** We have developed a single view of waiting times across our hospitals which is helping us develop a more consistent approach to managing waiting lists. In some cases, we will be able to offer patients waiting for a particular operation or procedure at a hospital with long waits and limited capacity the opportunity to have their operation or procedure at another hospital in the area that has shorter waits and more capacity.
- **'Fast-track surgical hubs':** We have identified 14 surgical facilities across north west London that are now dedicated to specific routine operations, Evidence shows that carrying out high volumes, systematically, will improve quality and efficiency. We offer care at one of these 'fast-track surgical hubs' to patients from across our hospitals' waiting lists, in order of clinical priority.
- **Increasing capacity:** We are organising extra operating lists and clinics where possible, including at weekends and evenings in some cases. Recognising how hard our own staff have worked during the pandemic we are also looking to external organisations to help us provide some of this additional capacity



**Map of NHS Trusts/ Hospitals across NWL*

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you feel you are becoming more unwell, please contact your GP or NHS 111 for a medical review. They will be able to advise if this is something they can support you with during your wait. If you need specialist help, they will be able to direct you to the appropriate service to agree a management plan.

If you ever think a situation is a life-threatening medical emergency, please call 999 immediately.

General information

For information around accessing the NHS and other healthcare services during coronavirus (Covid-19) please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/using-the-nhs-and-other-health-services/>

For general information around having an operation (surgery) please visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/having-surgery/>

For information about how to stay well while waiting for surgery visit:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/>

For general information around preparing for and recovering from surgery please visit the Royal college of Surgeons website:

<https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>

What should I do if I no longer need treatment or surgery, or would like to cancel or rearrange it?

We know that during this time the situation for some of our patients will have changed; your condition may have improved, or you may have received treatment somewhere else. If you think you no longer need your surgery or procedure, or you would like to postpone or change the date please contact us, using the details below.

Contact us

For contact details for the clinical teams at your local Trust, please click on the appropriate link.

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust -


<https://www.chelwest.nhs.uk/>

- Chelsea and Westminster Hospital - 020 3315 8000
- West Middlesex University Hospital - 020 8560 2121

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust - <https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/>

Tel: If you are waiting for surgery, please call 020 3311 4333, and if you are waiting for an outpatient appointment, please call 020 3311 4222.

London North West University Healthcare NHS Trust - <https://www.lnwh.nhs.uk/>

- Central Middlesex Hospital - 020 8965 5733
 - Ealing Hospital - 020 8967 5000
 - Northwick Park Hospital - 020 8864 3232
- 

The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - <https://www.thh.nhs.uk/>

- Hillingdon Hospital - 01895 542465
- Mount Vernon Hospital - 01923 826111

The Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust - <https://www.thh.nhs.uk/>

- Hillingdon Hospital - 01895 542465
- Mount Vernon Hospital - 01923 826111

