

While you wait for your operation

What we're doing

One of the often overlooked impacts of the pandemic has been the impact it has had on women waiting for planned (elective) surgery.

Everyone at Birmingham Women's Hospital is doing all we can to see patients as soon as is practically possible. To do this we are putting on additional clinics, tests like x-rays or scans and surgery sessions. But despite these efforts we know for some they may still have to wait longer than we would like.

What you can do

One of the most important things you can do while waiting for surgery is to keep fit and well and if possible improve your health and fitness as that can help reduce risk and improve recovery times. There's information below on how you can do that.

However, the most important thing is to monitor your health and to get in touch with either your GP or your Women's Hospital Clinic, if you feel your condition has deteriorated or if you have any concerns.

If you are concerned or feel you need urgent help please contact NHS 111 which can find the help you need.

Please be reassured that although it is taking longer and planned for us to see you, we are still by your side.

Moving more

Having an operation can place a strain on the heart, lungs and muscles. Physical activity and training help prepare your body for an operation.

Improved fitness levels allow your body to cope better with the physical stress of surgery and will reduce your chances of complications.

The benefits of improved fitness before surgery include:

- A better recovery
- Leaving hospital sooner
- Returning to a normal quality of life more quickly
- Reducing your risk of heart disease, stroke, and diabetes
- Improving blood pressure control and cholesterol levels
- Helping with weight control



- Reducing anxiety and stress

The NHS has an excellent library of advice, videos and other tools to help you increase your physical activity in a safe and gradual way. [https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/Eating well](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/Eating%20well)

Eat well

Being overweight or having a high body mass index (bmi) can increase your risk during surgery and losing a few pounds could go a long way to helping with your recovery.

In order for your body to recover from surgery, it needs the right energy and nutrients. A healthy balanced diet is important to help prepare your body for surgery.



You should aim to eat three regular meals each day with a good balance of protein, carbohydrates and healthy fats. Try to avoid adding any extra sugar or salt to your diet

Find useful tips and ideas on eating more healthily at Change4Life:

www.nhs.uk/change4life

SMOKING

If you are a smoker, stopping, or even cutting down, before your surgery is one of the best changes you can make to improve your health.

Smoking puts an additional strain on your heart and lungs and increases the risk of complications during and after surgery.

What you can do...

The important thing is that stopping smoking before surgery reduces your risk of these complications. The longer before your operation you can stop, the better. However, even avoiding cigarettes in the last few days can help.

An operation provides a great opportunity to improve your long-term health by stopping smoking. Perhaps it could be an opportunity to quit smoking for good?

Support to stop...

Quitting smoking is not easy, but we are here to support you. If stopping is something you are motivated to do, speak to your surgeon or pre-assessment nurse who can refer you to our smoking cessation service.

They offer individual and group support, as well as a range of nicotine replacement options. You can also find help and support online with <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>

Mental wellbeing

As important as physical wellbeing is it is important that you look after your own mental health. We know it can be hard waiting for your care among all the demands of modern life. Remember, it's ok to not be ok, and if you need help there are a number of local and national services available to you. You can find out more by clicking the links below.

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/>

<https://www.birminghamandsolihullccg.nhs.uk/your-health/mental-health-support-offer>

