

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on our ability to provide routine planned care. 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.

We continuously review all our patients waiting for treatment, to help us prioritise those in most urgent need. Please be assured we are doing our utmost to ensure you and those you care about get the treatment you require as soon as possible. This may sometimes involve us offering you a date for your treatment at short notice. If you are able to be flexible in the dates and times you can accept, this greatly supports us in our efforts to treat our patients.

This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself whilst waiting to attend the hospital. In preparation for your upcoming treatment, there are things you can do beforehand to increase your chances of a better recovery by being as healthy and as strong as you can be. You can take good care of yourself by taking a few smart steps, which can help you avoid complications. Follow these simple tips to ensure the best possible outcome and prepare for a successful recovery.

If you are awaiting a surgical procedure that may require a general anaesthetic, The Royal College of Anaesthetists have some excellent written and video-based resources about what to expect from anaesthetics and also how to keep fit and healthy before your procedure.

[Patient information leaflets and video resources | The Royal College of Anaesthetists \(rcoa.ac.uk\)](#)

[02-YourAnaesthetic2020web.pdf \(rcoa.ac.uk\)](#)

## Take Your Medication

You will be advised on which medicines to continue, and which to stop taking prior to your procedure. You may also be asked to take some extra medicines in the days before your procedure. Your clinician or pre-operative nurse will provide you with this information.

When taking medication, you should always;

- Take it at the right time of day and at the dose recommended by your GP/Pharmacist.
- Check instructions to make sure you are taking it properly. For example some medicines should only be taken before a meal or with water or food.
- Use your own supply and never take medication prescribed for someone else.

It is important to let your GP or pharmacist know if you experience any side effects as they may decide to change the dose or try a different medicine for you.

Please see this link for further advice and guidance; [Medicines - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

## Improve Your Health

Healthy changes start with little changes. Whether you want to lose weight, get active or quit smoking,

### Exercise

Physical activity or exercise is good for your body and mind, and better fitness levels can reduce complications when having any procedure, allowing you to leave hospital and return to your normal quality of life more quickly.

- Complications can be reduced by 30-80% if exercise is undertaken daily for 4 weeks before a surgical procedure. [Proving the Case for Perioperative Care | Centre for Perioperative Care \(cpoc.org.uk\)](#)

This website from the Royal College of Anaesthetists provides some useful information, including a video on how to best prepare for surgery:

[Preparing for surgery – Fitter Better Sooner | The Royal College of Anaesthetists \(rcoa.ac.uk\)](#)

Adults should aim to keep an active lifestyle. A daily brisk walk can boost your energy, lift your mood and make everyday activities easier. If you are normally an active person it is important to keep that up before your procedure. To stay fit and healthy, it's recommended you get at least 150 minutes of moderate aerobic activity such as brisk walking, riding a bike or dancing a week, or around 20 to 30 minutes a day. Moderate aerobic activity raises your heart rate and makes you breathe faster. One way to tell if you are working hard enough is if you can still talk but not sing.

There are some really useful guides at [Physical activity guidelines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) which explain the different types of physical activity required at different life stages from early years (under 5s) to older adults.

People with lower 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. Please visit [Get active - Better Health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) for some useful tips on how to stay fit and healthy. You can even start small and look to do [Sitting exercises - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) and even [Chair-based pilates video workout - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#). [Couch to 5K: week by week - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#) also provides a 9 week plan to help you achieve significant fitness levels.

### Weight & Obesity

In England, almost 7 in 10 men and 6 in 10 women are overweight or obese, and a quarter of all adults are clinically obese. Being overweight or obese increases your risk of developing serious diseases such as type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and some cancers. It can also increase your risk of certain surgical or anaesthetic complications during or after a procedure.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is one measure that uses your height and weight to work out if your weight is healthy. The BMI calculation divides an adult's weight in kilograms by their height in metres squared. For example, A BMI of 25 means 25kg/m<sup>2</sup>.

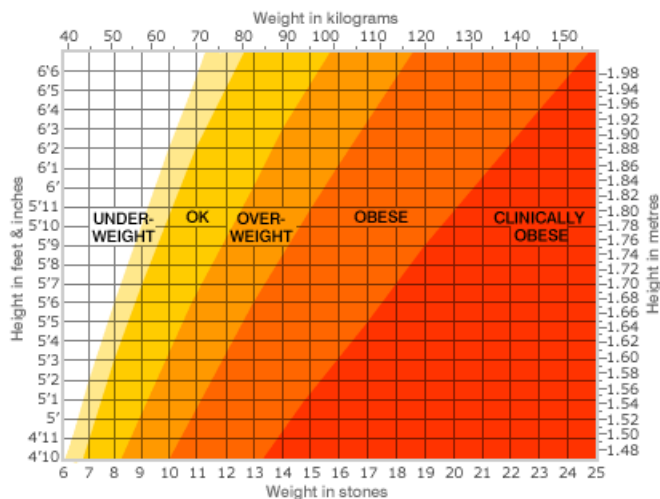
[BMI calculator | Check your BMI - NHS | \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

For most adults, an ideal BMI is in the 18.5 to 24.9 range.

If your BMI is:

- below 18.5 – you're in the underweight range
- between 18.5 and 24.9 – you're in the healthy weight range
- between 25 and 29.9 – you're in the overweight range
- between 30 and 39.9 – you're in the obese range

You may have already had your height and weight measured in a clinic at the hospital. You can look at this chart to help work out if you are under-weight or over-weight.



If you are overweight, losing weight has many health benefits. Making small, simple changes to what and how much you are eating and drinking can really help you lose the pounds. For example small changes like swapping sugary drinks for water or ditching sugar from your tea can make a big difference in the long term.

You can find more information and help here:

[Healthy weight loss - British Nutrition Foundation](#)

It is also important to maintain a healthy weight range (above a BMI of 18.5) as being underweight can also be associated with some poorer post-operative outcomes. Good nutrition (eating well), and keeping to a healthy weight will keep up your strength, increase your energy levels and improve your sense of well-being.

[British Dietetic Association Homepage | British Dietetic Association \(BDA\)](#)

## Smoking

Stopping smoking is one of the best things you will ever do for your health. When you stop, you give your lungs the chance to repair and you will be able to breathe easier. There are lots of other benefits too – and they start almost immediately. It's never too late to quit.

- Stopping smoking for 4 weeks before a procedure can halve the risk of complications [Smoking greatly increases risk of complications after surgery \(who.int\)](#)

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.

[Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

### Local Stop smoking services

Nottingham City residents

Stub It 0115 8240583

[Stub it! - Nottingham City GP Alliance \(ncgpa.org.uk\)](#)

Nottinghamshire County residents

Your health your way 0115 772 2515

<https://yourhealthnotts.co.uk/stop-smoking/>

## 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. Cutting back on alcohol can be a really effective way to improve your health, boost your energy, lose weight and save money. Any reduction in the amount you drink every week will be beneficial – and with the right help, it's easier than you think.

[Drink less - Better Health - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Some further simple general health considerations are

- 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.

## Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE) before procedure

Blood clots, such as DVT and PE are a recognised risk after many surgical procedures. 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 – as described above
- Maintain a healthy weight (see above)
- Keep hydrated

Your doctors will assess your risk of DVT and PE when you come into hospital and arrange a treatment plan. This may include prescribed medications before or after procedure, or when you go home, to prevent blood clots.

## Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about having a procedure.

To maintain good mental health there are lots of things we can do to help. For example

- Get good sleep
- Spending quality time with others
- Live a healthy life; (be active maintain a balanced diet).
- Relaxation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises can all help.

To learn more about how to maintain a good mental health use the link below.

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/top-tips-to-improve-your-mental-wellbeing>

Your GP can also advise you on support in your local area.

[How to access mental health services - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

You can also [find simple ways to lift your mood](#) with Every Mind Matters. For any urgent help with your mental health please follow the below links which contain useful information and contact numbers

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