



Introduction

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare services nationally were impacted in the way in which they provided treatment, including routine elective services. As such patients may have to wait longer than we all would wish.

There are some measures that can be undertaken in the period between initial diagnosis and treatment to lessen the symptoms of your condition, giving you better quality of life and helping with your recovery. The following guidance has been certified by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Responding to changes in your condition

You can look up your condition at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/> for an overview of what you can expect or should look out for.

It is possible that your condition may change. If you think things are getting worse, or that the medicine prescribed to you has either stopped working or is no longer working as intended, you should contact your GP as soon as possible. They may wish to review you and can contact the Trust for advice and guidance from the Trust's specialist team.

If your condition worsens suddenly, you can dial NHS 111 or go to <https://111.nhs.uk/> if you believe the situation is not an emergency.

NHS 111 staff can guide you where to get help for your symptoms, advise you if you're not sure what to do and tell you how to find general health information and advice. Including where to get an emergency supply of your prescribed medicine and how to get a repeat prescription.

They may also be able to arrange for an appointment at a medical facility near you.

In the event of an emergency or life-threatening change in condition always head to A&E or dial 999 as appropriate.

Take your medication

Medicines are prescribed to treat your symptoms and to help you manage or overcome certain health conditions. Failing to use medicines as instructed can result in worsened health, longer

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recovery, unwanted side effects, and other serious health conditions that require intensive treatment.

A better health outcome is the most significant benefit of using medication correctly as prescribed.

Before using a new medication, carefully read all the directions on the label. If you're confused or unsure about how to properly take the medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist. They can also explain possible side effects that you may face when misusing the medication and warn against combining with other medicines.

Some additional tips:

- Use your medication at the same time every day to prevent the overlapping of doses.
- Keep an updated list of all the medications on hand (including amount you take and the frequency), so any healthcare professional you meet knows your full drug history.
- Check to see whether your medications should be taken on an empty or full stomach.
- Build medication into your daily routine so you never forget to take it, such as before brushing your teeth at night or after eating breakfast.
- Use daily pill containers to help you keep track of whether you've taken your daily doses.
- Refill your daily pill container on the same day every week to avoid doubling up on doses.
- Buy timer caps for all your pill bottles to keep track of when you last took your medications.
- Don't share or give away medications. This practice is illegal and dangerous and can harm those who take your medications without a valid prescription.
- If you have a regular/daily prescription, take enough of your medication with you to cover your travel period as well as any delay you may face so that you're safely covered.
- When traveling by airplane, always pack medication in your carry-on bag to prevent damage from changes in temperature and air pressure. Also, you'll have it on hand if your luggage is lost or damaged.
- Don't stop using your medication unless directed to do so by your doctor, since abruptly stopping some medicines can lead to severe side effects.

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

Finding a Pharmacy

Pharmacists are not just able to dispense prescriptions. They are also able to give advice and guidance on issues relating to both medicines you are or could take, and any ailments you may be having. You can find a pharmacy near you by searching on the NHS website.

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Go to: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>

Healthy lifestyle

Trying to live a healthier lifestyle can improve not only your physical fitness but also improve your mental health and wellbeing. The Trust actively promotes healthy lifestyle choices to not just patients and visitors but also residents and staff. However, there are also additional local organisations dedicated to these goals.

You can find out more about the below topics, as well as other matters such as mental health, sexual health and support for young and old alike at the following websites:

Healthy Sandwell - <https://www.healthysandwell.co.uk/>

Birmingham City Council - https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50118/health_and_wellbeing

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

Healthy eating

Healthy eating means eating the right amounts of a variety of foods. A healthy, balanced diet is an important part of maintaining good health and can help you feel your best and give your body what it needs to be strong, grow or help heal itself. This means eating both a wide variety of foods in the right proportions and consuming the right amount of food and drink to achieve this.

You should try to:

- Eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables every day (aka your '5 A Day')
- Base meals on higher fibre starchy foods such as potatoes, bread, rice or pasta
- Include some dairy or dairy alternatives – for example soya-based drinks
- Eat some beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other protein sources
- Choose unsaturated oils and spreads, and eat them in small amounts
- Drink plenty of fluids - at least 6 to 8 glasses a day.

Making healthy eating a normal part of life is the best way to maintain or achieve the levels you need. People with special dietary needs or a medical condition should ask their doctor or a registered dietitian for advice.

Find out more with the NHS Eatwell Guide: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/the-eatwell-guide/>

Stay active

It is important to remember that having a healthy lifestyle isn't just about healthy eating; it also involves being active and getting plenty of exercise. Walking, running, cycling can all help towards

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your overall health, helping to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke and osteoporosis (thinning of the bones).

Benefits also include:

- Looking and feeling healthier
- Increased energy levels
- Better sleep
- Saving money
- Increased confidence
- Greater awareness of your local area
- Reduced stress
- Weight control

Alcohol use

Alcohol is not just something that makes you drunk, it is a toxic chemical that can have a wide range of adverse effects on almost every part of your body.

The effects of alcohol can vary. Sometimes you feel the effects almost instantly. Other times this can take longer and might be after you've had a few drinks. Drinking more than the low-risk guidelines on a regular basis increases your risk of serious health conditions.

To keep your risk of alcohol-related harm low:

- Men and women are advised not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week on a regular basis.
- If you drink as much as 14 units a week, it's best to spread this evenly over 3 or more days
- If you're trying to reduce the amount of alcohol you drink, it's a good idea to have several alcohol-free days each week
- if you're pregnant or trying to become pregnant, the safest approach is to not drink alcohol at all to keep risks to your baby to a minimum
- Regular or frequent drinking means drinking alcohol most days and weeks.

A unit of alcohol is 8g or 10ml of pure alcohol, which is about half a pint of lower to normal-strength lager/beer/cider (ABV 3.6%) or a single small shot measure (25ml) of spirits (25ml, ABV 40%)

The risk to your health is increased by drinking any amount of alcohol on a regular basis. Serious risks include a greater chance of the following:

- Cancers of the mouth, upper throat, larynx, oesophagus, breast, liver and bowel
- Stroke
- Heart disease
- Liver disease
- Damage to the nervous system

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- Pancreatitis
- Mental health problems

As well as short term risks of alcohol misuse such as alcohol poisoning, a greater chance of injury from accidents and social problems.

The Trust operates a specialist Alcohol Care team which can help provide support for patients suffering from alcohol-related issues. Find out more about the team's work [here](#).

Smoking and our smoking policy

Smoking is one of the biggest causes of death and illness in the UK. Every year around 78,000 people in the UK die from smoking, with many more living with debilitating smoking-related illnesses. Smoking increases your risk of developing more than 50 serious health conditions with many with serious consequences.

- Smoking causes around 7 out of every 10 cases of lung cancer (70%), it can also cause cancer in many other parts of the body, including the mouth, areas of the throat, the bladder and bowels, liver and stomach.
- It increases the chances of suffering a heart attack or stroke
- Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of complications
- Increases the health risks to others via second-hand smoke.
- Increases the risks when undergoing anaesthesia.
- Can impact the ability of the body to heal wounds.

As of 5 July 2019, our Trust turned smoke free; meaning no smoking is allowed anywhere on our sites, including outdoor areas within the boundary of Trust lands. Our boundary has been defined by a single red painted line around our facilities to make this clear.

We do support vaping within the grounds, with shelters in place for vapers only. Vaping is, however, not allowed in our buildings or by our entrances or windows. This is in-line with current Public Health England advice.

The maximum fine for anyone caught smoking on site is £50, which includes smoking in cars on our premises.

Find out more about the Trust's smokefree policy here:

<https://www.swbh.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/before-you-arrive/smokefree/>

Attending the Trust

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The contents of this information has been reviewed and approved by the Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust Medical Director, Dr David Carruthers.

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Depending upon what you require treatment for, you may be asked to attend an appointment at several locations at the Trust. The Birmingham City Hospital site includes the Birmingham Treatment Centre (BTC) and the Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre (BMEC). The Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) is situated at Sandwell General Hospital. Rowley Regis Hospital is also another site you may be asked to go to.

For more information, including directions and maps to our facilities please go to:

<https://www.swbh.nhs.uk/contact-locations/find-us/>

Contact

If you do need to contact us, you can do so via one of the telephone numbers below:

Sandwell and City Hospitals - switchboard: 0121 554 3801

Birmingham Midland Eye Centre (BMEC): 0121 507 4440

Rowley Regis Hospital: 0121 507 6300

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): 0121 507 5836

The NHS Appointments line: 0345 608 8888

Maternity: 0121 507 5923

Changing your appointment

To cancel/change your appointment you can call 0121 507 4151 or submit the request online via <https://www.swbh.nhs.uk/contact-locations/change-your-appointment/>.

If using the online form, please allow two working days for a response from our team. If you would like to amend an appointment for the same day please call the relevant telephone number on your appointment correspondence.

Social media

The Trust also operates several social media accounts. For the latest news from the Trust, you can follow or subscribe to the social accounts.

These are:

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Twitter: <https://twitter.com/SWBHnhs>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SWBHNHS/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/SWBHnhs/>

YouTube: <http://youtube.com/swbhnh1>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/swbhnh1/>

Additional information can be found on the Trust website at <https://www.swbh.nhs.uk/>, with a regularly updated list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) available at <https://www.swbh.nhs.uk/contact-locations/faq/>. This includes additional contact numbers and advice related to specific services, mental health, accessing your medical records, employment and more.