

Introduction

The COVID-19 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 identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

The following website also provides useful information:

<https://bnsgccg.nhs.uk/health-services/waiting-your-hospital-care/>

Guidance for Patients

Getting prepared to have surgery or a procedure is all about good preparation for your body and mind. During this time, you can take simple steps to improve your physical and mental health.

Benefits of this include:

- Enhance recovery following treatment.
- Reduce post-op complications.
- Reduce length of stay in hospital.
- Provide an opportunity to stop smoking and drinking alcohol.
- Improve fitness.
- Improve nutritional health.
- Enhance quality of life.

Take Your Medication

You may be taking different medications for different things. You should ensure that your GP reviews your medications prior to having a procedure or operation so that you have an accurate up-to-date list. You should always bring a list of current medications, vitamins, herbal remedies and supplements you take with you to any appointments.

You should take your medications as usual, as directed by your GP and/or hospital specialist. You will be advised what medication to continue and what you may need to stop before you come into hospital.

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Keep Moving

Healthy eating and being active

People who exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing many long term (chronic) conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke and some cancers. Research shows that physical activity can also boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing stress and clinical depression.

Whatever your age, being physically active can help you lead a healthier and happier life.

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

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/> - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet.
- <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/get-active/> - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.

Improve Your Health

Speak to your GP – if you have a long-standing medical problem such as diabetes, asthma, bronchitis, thyroid problems, heart problems or high blood pressure (hypertension) you should ask your GP if you need a check-up before your operation date. If you have any test results, please bring them with you to your appointments.

Speak to your dentist – If you have any loose teeth or crowns or have any toothache. Treatment from your dentist may reduce the risks of infection and from the equipment used during anaesthesia to support your breathing.

Speak to the hospital team – If you are pregnant or breastfeeding so that we can make an appropriate plan for your surgery.

Stop smoking/vaping/e-cigarettes – This reduces the risk of breathing problems, makes your anaesthetic safer and reduces the risk of post operative problems like chest infections.

For further advice or support with smoking cessation:

Smokefree Bristol – Local stop smoking service

Contact: 0117 922 2255

<http://www.smokefreebristol.com/>

Smokefree – For help and advice on stopping smoking, and for details of your local NHS Stop Smoking Service

Free Helpline: 0800 022 4332

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>

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Quit – A charity that helps people to stop smoking

Quitline: 0800 00 22 00

<http://www.quit.org.uk/>

Lose weight – If you are overweight, reducing your weight will reduce many of the risks of having an anaesthetic and surgery.

Your GP may be able to give you advice on healthy eating or other weight loss clubs local to you.

Good Mental Health

Looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical health. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty for everyone, and there has never been a more important time to take care of your mental health. Mental health and emotional wellbeing affect all aspects of our lives and health choices. Mental wellbeing is about feeling good and functioning well, as individuals and as communities. It is also about our ability to cope with life's problems and making the most of life's opportunities.

Your GP would probably be your first point of contact if you feel your mental health is being impacted. They may be able to provide advice or information on local support.

We will do everything we can to make sure your appointment or operation happens as soon as possible but in the meantime the organisations below offer different support services:

1. <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/social-care-health/mental-health-services>
2. Normal Magic Counselling services- support your wellbeing
<https://normalmagic.co.uk>
3. Mental health help – text, chat, video or call – counselling services
<https://www.betterhelp.com>

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you are struggling with your health (including both physical and mental health) while you wait for surgery, please consult your GP.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it is not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit <https://www.nhs.uk/>. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening dial 999: see the webpage <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/urgent-and-emergency-care-services/when-to-call-999/>.