

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 guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

When you are waiting for further treatment it can sometimes feel like a long wait. The information and advice here is aimed at helping you manage that wait so you arrive for your appointment in the best possible physical and mental health.

The NHS has limited resources which means that we are unable to treat you as quickly as we would like. Each healthcare provider has to consider the type of help you need, how quickly you need treatment, the best course of action to help you and when and where you can be seen.

The process of sorting patients based on their individual needs is called prioritisation. The system of prioritisation is applied consistently across the NHS to help us to decide the order in which patients receive their treatment. This is essential to ensure that we provide care based on need. The system means that care is delivered in the fairest way possible.

Once a referral has been made from primary care to secondary care, the specialist team conduct assessments and then agree with you on the right course of action. At this stage, the urgency will be assessed. If you have a long-term health condition, for example, you may need treatment faster than someone without.

You can find out more at www.dchft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/waiting-well/.

Take Your Medication

While waiting continue taking your medicine as directed by your GP and hospital specialist. At the pre-op assessment make sure you know the medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements you take and you'll be given clear information on whether you should stop taking your usual medicines before going into hospital.

Continue to take your medication as prescribed. If you need to stop any medication prior to your operation, you will be advised of this when contacted and given a date for your surgery.

You will be advised to continue with your normal medications, but you may be advised to stop some medications before your procedure, your clinician or pre-operative nurse will provide you with this information.

Keep Moving

Exercise regularly: Among other benefits, better fitness levels reduce complications when having any procedure. This allows you to leave hospital and return to your normal quality of life more quickly. Keeping an active lifestyle is good for your health and if you are normally an active person it is important to keep that up before your procedure. People with low 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. Couch to 5K: week by week - NHS (www.nhs.uk).

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Prepare yourself for surgery: 'Prehabilitation' is all about good preparation for your body and mind prior to surgery. In the time before your surgery, you can take simple steps to improve your physical and mental health. This will reduce your risk of complications and improve your wellbeing now and in your recovery. Research shows that people who keep mentally or physically active feel happier and so become healthier. Maintaining and improve your overall wellbeing will lead to a faster recovery if you require surgery.

Once you are referred by your GP the waiting journey begins. Make the most of the time before you see your specialist.

Top of the list of things to work on are stopping smoking, maintaining a healthy weight, getting fitter and drinking less alcohol. [LiveWell Dorset](#) is a local service which can offer you support to tackle all or any of these, or have a look at the [Better Health](#) website.

Looking after your mental health is just as important as your physical health. [Dorset HealthCare](#) provide our local mental health services and can offer support for a wide range of mental health issues.

For more information and advice you can watch the helpful video below from the [Royal College of Anaesthetists](#) - *Preparing for surgery: Fitter Better Sooner*

Improve Your Health

LiveWell Dorset support: Funded by Public Health Dorset, the [LiveWell Dorset service](#) is free for all adults living in Dorset. LiveWell's advice and coaching service can help you [get active](#), [lose weight](#), [stop smoking](#) or [drink less alcohol](#). It's a simple, no-sweat solution to introducing better health and wellbeing into your world.

You can also sign up to one of our free Virtual Health MOTs. This 20-minute confidential 1-2-1 session is designed to assess lifestyle choices with a member of the LiveWell team. [Book now on Eventbrite!](#)

Why is it free? Public Health Dorset is a partnership of Dorset Council and BCP Council. They partner with Dorset's local authorities, the NHS and others to provide this FREE healthy lifestyle advice and coaching.

Information About Your Condition

Further information may be found on the Our Dorset health video library. The library contains simple and engaging videos to help our patients access quality and assured health information, which have been developed and approved by NHS clinicians. These videos offer a practical alternative to written information and aim to help our patients take better control of their health and provide education and support to manage long term health conditions. They can be accessed by following this link –

[Our Dorset Video Library](#)

Good Mental Health

The coronavirus pandemic has caused uncertainty for everyone, and there has never been a more important time to take care of your mental health. We are working with partners across to Dorset to support the mental health of Dorset residents and people working on the frontline of the coronavirus response.

You can find lots of mental health and wellbeing advice on the [Dorset HealthCare website](#) and <https://www.publichealthdorset.org.uk/your-health/mental-health>

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If you are feeling constantly worried or depressed, or you are worried about someone else's mental health, you can call Connection, Dorset's 24/7 mental health helpline, on 0800 652 0190.