

Staying Healthy

A guide to improving
Your general health



Staying Healthy Guidance

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and this may have caused you disruptions.

It is not always possible to clearly identify when treatment will take place and we apologise for any delay in providing you with an appointment.

We thank you for your patience and reassure you that we have not forgotten about you and that if your referral is urgent, we will prioritise your case.

The information below is aimed at helping you arrive for your appointment or treatment in the best possible physical and mental health. Maintaining and improving your overall wellbeing will also lead to faster recovery if you require surgery.

Keeping moving and improving your health

Did you know that to stay fit and healthy, it's recommended you get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week, or around 20 to 30 minutes a day.

There are steps you can take now to help make your treatment a success. The national [Better Health](#) website can also help you to kickstart your health ahead of your appointments and prepare you for a healthier, happier future, to quit smoking and reduce your alcohol intake.

No matter how much you do, physical activity is good for your body and mind. Adults should aim to be active every day. Some is good – more is better still. A daily, brisk walk can boost your energy, lift your mood and make everyday activities easier.

Quit Smoking

If you're going into hospital for treatment, it's strongly advised that you stop smoking as soon as possible. Quitting smoking before an operation will reduce your chances of complications and speed up your recovery after surgery. It will also make your stay at hospital more comfortable as smoking is not permitted on hospital grounds.

Try to quit smoking as soon as you can, as this will give your body as much time as possible to repair itself before surgery. The best way to quit smoking is with a combination of personalised support and stop smoking aids, like nicotine replacement.

Free quitting services

With help, you're much more likely to quit smoking than if you use willpower alone. Visit [Make Smoking History](#) to get free access to the latest quitting aids, one-to-one advice and support in your local area.

You can also speak to your GP or local pharmacist for help to stop smoking.

Healthy eating

Healthy eating is about enjoying your meals and at the same time having a balance of different foods. Being mindful about what we eat can help us maintain a healthy body weight. This can benefit us by ensuring our bodies have the required nutrients for growth and repair before and after treatment.

A balanced diet consists of:

- At least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day
- Potatoes, bread, rice and pasta
- Beans, pulses, fish, eggs and meat
- Dairy and alternatives
- Oils and spreads

For more information on healthy eating you can visit [Live well – Eat Well](#)

Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery.

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 support, it's easier than you think. There are some simple tips and tools to help you start cutting down today.

You can also download the free [Drink Free Days](#) app.

Get medical advice before you stop drinking if you have physical withdrawal symptoms (like shaking, sweating or feeling anxious until you have your first drink of the day). It can be dangerous to stop drinking too quickly without proper help. There's lots of support out there.

Find your [local alcohol support service now](#), or call Drinkline on 0300 123 1110 for free, confidential help for anyone who is concerned about their own or someone else's drinking.

Take Your Medication

Whilst waiting for your hospital treatment, continue to follow medical advice and take any medications as prescribed.

Make a list of any medicines you are taking, including prescriptions, medicines you've bought yourself or any alternative treatments and take this along to your appointments.

Looking after your mental health

Having good mental health helps us relax, achieve and enjoy our lives more. We have expert advice and practical tips to help you look after your mental health and wellbeing.

Mental health issues – We all have mental health, and life is full of ups and downs for everyone. Here you will find expert advice, practical tips and plenty of help and support if you're feeling stressed, anxious, low, or struggling with relationships or sleep.

Here you will find some [general information on mental health issues](#) and some [top tips to improve your mental wellbeing](#). Apps to support your health, mental health and wellbeing:

- [Feeling anxious?](#)
- [Feeling stressed?](#)
- [Feeling low?](#)
- [Trouble sleeping?](#)

If you are looking for more support, check with your GP regarding your local services. If you are based in Surrey, you can self-refer to NHS [Talking Therapies](#) by calling them on 01483 906392.

Free text and online support:

SHOUT. With this 24/7 crisis text messaging service, you can send a text message any time of day or night wherever you are – every conversation is with a real person. Just text SHOUT to 85258.

You don't need an app or data and there's no registration process for this confidential and anonymous service. It's silent and won't appear on your phone bill.

If you feel that you need urgent help to be able to keep yourself or others safe, it is important to contact your GP. Outside of GP hours, the following crisis support is available:

Crisis Helpline

In times of crisis or distress please call: 0300 456 83 42

5.00pm – 9.00am Monday to Friday, with 24 hours cover at weekends including Bank Holidays.

Samaritans (24 hours daily)

Freephone: 116 123

email: jo@samaritans.org

Financial Support

Waiting for treatment could be impacting you financially, which can affect your mental and physical health. It can affect how many hours you are able to work and how much you are able to earn. If you are struggling to pay bills, need help with a benefits issue or are concerned about growing debts, there is free confidential advice and support to help you. Contact the organisations below to find out more:

Step Change Debt Charity – www.stepchange.org

Turn2us – www.turn2us.org.uk/get-support

NHS Low Income Scheme – www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme

Citizens Advice – www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Patient Feedback Team

Our patient feedback team is available to help with any of your compliments, complaints or concerns. They can be contacted on:

patientfeedback.dhc@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know.

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions

DHC website: www.dhcclinical.co.uk