

Information for patients undergoing surgical procedures involving anaesthesia during the COVID-19 pandemic



At Circle Health we are committed to your safety and supporting you to make the right decisions about your care in the light of the additional risks created by COVID-19.

This leaflet includes details about the potential impact of COVID-19 on your forthcoming operation but, please remember that a member of our team is always happy to answer questions you may have about your care.

Your surgeon and the hospital team

Your surgeon will discuss the possible outcomes of the operation with you and, if appropriate your family or carers, before reaching a shared decision with you. This discussion will:



cover the benefits of having the operation, and the effects on your health and wellbeing of postponing or not having it



ensure that you understand the risks associated with COVID-19 during the operation and that you have given your informed consent



include alternative options if you wish to decline or postpone your operation

It is important that you feel well informed about the benefits and risks involved in your operation, including those that can be caused by COVID-19 before you give your consent.

Your surgeon may also wish to discuss the impact of the prevalence of COVID-19 in your local area.

You can access information about this here:

Risks associated with COVID-19



Whilst the impact of COVID-19 on surgery is not yet fully understood, there is evidence that some patients undergoing surgery while they are infected with COVID-19 are at risk of developing serious complications or death during the period after surgery. A recent research study indicated that developing COVID-19 at the time of an operation could lead to a risk of death of 19%*, supporting the importance of self-isolation and testing before surgery.

There are a number of individual factors which are associated with the increased risk of becoming severely ill if you undergo an operation whilst having a COVID-19 infection. These factors include:

- older age (70 or older)
- being male
- people from a black, Asian or other minority ethnic group
- underlying health conditions such as obesity, diabetes or high blood pressure
- being clinically extremely vulnerable.

There are some circumstances that might increase the risk that you are exposed to COVID-19 prior to your operation. These include:

- particular occupations, for example, work involving direct contact with multiple other people in a closed environment
- particular living arrangements, for example, multigenerational households or social care environments

There are some operations which carry greater risk if the person undergoing the operation is infected with COVID-19. These include:

- cancer surgery
- major surgery
- emergency surgery

Your surgeon will consider your risk profile and advise you of the risks and benefits of the various options which are clinically suitable for you as well as the steps that you should take if you are at higher risk.

Optimising your health and wellbeing before your operation

Patients who are able to improve their health and activity levels are therefore fitter and recover from surgery more quickly. Your clinical team will advise you of some of the steps that you should take to optimise your health and wellbeing before your operation.

These may include:

- taking regular exercise
- doing strengthening and balance exercises
- improving your mental wellbeing
- reducing your alcohol consumption
- stopping smoking
- controlling any existing conditions

You can access further information on improving your health before your operation here:

<https://www.cpoc.org.uk/patients>

Preparation for your operation

In order to protect you from COVID-19 infection and prevent spread of the virus it is important that you:

- minimise contact with others, follow comprehensive 2 metre social distancing and rigorous hand hygiene for 14 days before your operation.
- have a COVID-19 test a maximum of 72 hours before your operation
- observe strict self-isolation, alone or with friends or family, between the time of your test and your operation.

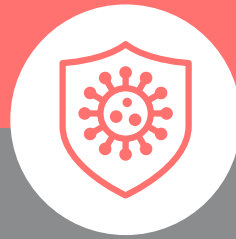
If you are at greater risk of getting COVID-19 or at risk of a poorer outcome if you were to get COVID-19, you may wish to self-isolate for 14 days before your operation. Please refer to the risk factors which are set out above.

On the day before your admission we will call you to ask you whether you have symptoms of COVID-19. We will also ask you whether you have symptoms of COVID-19 and check your temperature on your arrival at hospital. Before your operation we will ask you to confirm you have adhered to the guidance on social distancing and self-isolation.



Transport

If possible, you should use private transport to get to and from the hospital. Your Consultant or members of the healthcare team will advise you on whether you will be able to drive following your operation or whether you should arrange that a family member or friend pick you up. If you are not able to arrange private transport you should follow UK government advice on using public transport.



Protecting you during your stay in hospital

In order to protect you and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our hospitals we have put in place a number of further safety measures. These include:

- enhanced standards of cleaning and infection prevention
- easy access to handwashing and hand sanitisers
- our clinical areas are cleaned after every appointment
- we ensure everyone maintains social distancing and wears a mask or face covering
- all of our staff use appropriate personal protective equipment
- everyone entering our hospitals is asked to complete a short health questionnaire and have a temperature check
- patients have access to on-site parking
- for those at higher risk, we ensure fast track access to the location in the hospital that you need to visit
- if you need to stay overnight you will be offered a single room for your safety and comfort
- we do not allow visitors or companions to accompany patients except in exceptional circumstances.

You can access these safety measures along with a range of further patient guides here:

<https://www.circlehealth.co.uk/news/attending-hospital-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic>

Postponing your operation

We are likely to postpone your operation if:

- your test result is not available or you test positive for COVID-19
- you have symptoms of COVID-19
- are not well enough for your operation
- you have had contact with someone with COVID-19, for example as identified through the NHS Test and Trace system.

If your operation is postponed you should speak to your hospital specialist team as soon as possible about rescheduling it.

Discharge arrangements



Your Consultant and members of the ward team will discuss your discharge and follow up arrangements with you including advice about what you should do if you develop symptoms of infection, including COVID-19 symptoms, within three weeks of your operation.

*Mortality and pulmonary complications in patients undergoing surgery with perioperative SARS-CoV-2. The Lancet May 2020