

Having an operation

Your pre-operative assessment and what to do next



Information for patients Pre-Operative Assessment

Preparing for admission

You have been offered an operation by your surgeon. Before your operation you will need to attend a pre-operative assessment appointment to make sure you are fit enough to have surgery.

Medical problems

If you have a long-term condition, such as diabetes, asthma or bronchitis, heart problems or high blood pressure, you should make sure you are as well as possible before your operation. If you think your condition could be improved, ask your GP for an extra check-up as soon as you know that you are having an operation.

The nursing staff in Pre-operative Assessment will ask you about your past medical history and will undertake a number of tests which will include some or all of the following:

- Height / weight
- Blood pressure
- MRSA swabs
- Blood tests
- ECG

Please bring with you a copy of your medication history or prescription sheet **from your GP**.

Getting your body ready for surgery

This is an opportunity to make some positive changes to your general health that will also improve your chances of a swift and smooth recovery. There are a number of things you can do with the help of your GP, to get your body and mind in the best condition for your surgery and anaesthetic.

Smoking: We know that if you smoke you are at higher risk of complications after surgery. The good news is that stopping smoking before surgery can dramatically improve outcomes like your length of stay in hospital, wound healing and lung function. Help is available from the NHS Stop Smoking service on www.nhs.uk, or call the Smokefree National Helpline on **0300 123 1044** (free). All patients having elective surgery at Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (STH) who smoke are referred from their pre-assessment to the Tobacco Treatment Service at STH.

Your weight: Some risks of having an operation are increased if you are very overweight. Slow, supervised weight loss is likely to be most successful, and will reduce many of the risks of having an anaesthetic. Eat well by having 5 portions of fruit and veg each day, reduce your sugar intake, and drink plenty of water. A good diet helps wound healing and your general wellbeing after the operation. Visit the NHS website for free weight loss support, or speak with your GP.

Activity: Healing after surgery puts extra demand on your heart and lungs. If you are already active, your heart and lungs will be better able to meet this demand, and improve your chances of a good recovery. Try to increase your activity levels, even if only for a few minutes a day, e.g. walking, gardening, swimming, cycling. All activities which make you feel slightly out of breath are helpful. Aim to do this 3 or more times a week. Regular exercise builds up your muscles, improves your breathing, and builds up your stamina. This will make you fitter for your operation, and will reduce fatigue after the operation. Further help on exercise is available on the NHS website.

Recreational drugs: It is important you are honest with us about recreational drug use, and avoid all recreational drugs before your operation, and on discharge. Visit the www.talktofrank.com website for friendly confidential drugs advice, the NHS website, or speak with your GP.

Alcohol has many effects on the body. It reduces the liver's ability to produce the building blocks for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended alcohol limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery. The Chief Medical Officer recommends that to keep health risks to a low level, it is safest not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week on a regular basis. If you do drink up to 14 units a week, it is best to spread this evenly over 3 days or more. Speak to your GP about where to find alcohol support, or use the resources on the NHS website.

Dental: To prevent any problems during your anaesthetic, please make sure that your dentist is happy with your teeth. You may need any loose teeth stabilising or removing prior to surgery. Any tooth decay or gum disease may lead to painful infections. Using antibacterial mouthwash containing chlorhexidine may help reduce your risk of infections. If you are not currently registered with a dentist please search on the NHS website to find one. Some operations may be delayed until your dental treatment is completed.

Is there anything I should do before my operation?

Before you come into hospital for surgery there are certain preparations you need to make:

- Do not smoke for 48 hours or more before your operation.
- Get some simple painkillers for when you are home, and make sure you have a supply of your repeat prescriptions.
- Arrange child care, and alternative care for people you are the main carer for.
- **Arrange for someone to collect you from hospital, and stay and look after you for 24 hours following your discharge.** You are advised not to drive, and you will normally be expected to make your own way home. NHS transport is only provided to patients who have a specific medical need. Remember to bring their contact details with you, so they can be contacted once you are ready for discharge.
- Follow any fasting instructions you are given (these will be on your admission letter).
- Brush your teeth twice a day, and use antibacterial mouthwash.
- Follow any specific instructions you are given at Pre-operative Assessment, including:
 - stopping or taking any medications
 - preparations such as specialist diets, drinks etc
- Arrange to have a small supply of your regular medications in their original packaging to bring into hospital with you.
- Arrange to have any false nails, wraps and gels removed. This is for infection control reasons and to enable monitoring.

- Stock up with easy to cook foods for when you get back home.
- Set things up at home to make it easier for you to get about afterwards if you will be less mobile. You may be able to borrow equipment to help you from the hospital or the Red Cross.

When will my operation take place?

Following your pre-operative assessment, feedback will be given to the waiting list co-ordinator to plan your admission to hospital. You will receive a letter informing you of your admission date, time, and place. Your letter will also inform you of your individual fasting requirements. You may also get a reminder by text message, email or phone call.

On the day of your operation

- Have a bath or shower, using antiseptic body or hair wash if provided.
- Take off all jewellery, except your wedding ring if you have one. It's best to leave jewellery at home.
- Body piercings should be removed if possible, as they may affect electrical equipment used in the operating theatre. If they cannot be removed, please tell the anaesthetist and nurses about them.
- Take off any nail varnish or false nails on your fingers and toes.
- Remove any hair extensions that contain metal clips.
- Remove make-up.
- Brush your teeth, and use an antibacterial mouthwash. You will need to remove dentures, dental palates and dental retainers immediately before your surgery.

What should I bring?

Essential items: (storage is limited)

- Any medication you are taking (tablets, medicines, inhalers). Please make sure they are in date, and in their original packaging.
- Dressing gown
- Sensible footwear with a non-slip sole
- Toothbrush, toothpaste, antibacterial mouthwash
- The contact number of the person collecting you when you are discharged

We also suggest that you add these items to your checklist:

- Pyjamas or nightdress
- Toiletries (including contact lens cases, denture pot, etc.)
- Mobility aids (frames and walking sticks)
- Hearing aids
- Glasses and case

You might also want to bring something to do during your stay, for example, a book, newspaper, magazine or crossword.

If you know you are having your surgery under a local, epidural or regional anaesthetic you may like to bring some music to listen to.

What not to bring

You are strongly advised not to bring any valuables, other than a small amount of money to buy newspapers, and pay for parking or telephone calls. The hospital cannot accept responsibility for personal property kept in lockers. If you cannot avoid bringing valuables into the hospital, please ask for them to be put in the hospital safe.

Reducing the risk of infection to yourself and others

You can help to reduce infection by following this advice:

- Have a shower or bath at home before admission.
- Clean your teeth twice a day and use your antibacterial mouthwash.
- Use the hand cleaning facilities at every ward entrance and every bedside.
- Ask the staff caring for you whether they have cleaned their hands – they really do not mind, and are expecting you to ask them.
- Remind everyone around you, including your visitors, to clean their hands.
- Follow the points in the Visitors' Code and on the signs at each ward entrance. These will tell you more about how you and your visitors can help us prevent the spread of infection.
- MRSA (Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) is a type of bacterial infection that is resistant to a number of widely used antibiotics. This means it can be more difficult to treat than other bacterial infections. At pre-operative assessment clinic we routinely test all patients for MRSA before admission. You may be given a pack of MRSA swabs to use at home in the 28 days leading up to your operation. Due to the nature of their surgery, some patients may also be given a pack with an antiseptic body and hair wash treatment and nasal treatment.

Reducing the risk of blood clots

Your risk of developing a blood clot in your leg, (Deep Vein Thrombosis - DVT), or a blood clot in your lung (Pulmonary Embolism - PE), will be assessed during your pre-operative appointment.

An increased risk of developing a blood clot can carry on for up to 3 months after you leave hospital. Dependent on your risk, you may be given anti-embolic stockings to wear, and/or prescribed medication. Further information on blood clots and travelling can be found on the NHS website. Most blood clots are preventable, so we highly recommend you follow this advice.

Your discharge from hospital

- Start planning your discharge home straight away by arranging someone to collect you from hospital and stay with you for 24 hours after your discharge.
- Organise your meals for when you are at home.
- On admission we will keep you updated with discharge arrangements, so that you and your family or carers can plan your return home.
- You will be given an expected date for discharge at the earliest opportunity, when the staff caring for you believe your treatment will be completed.
- You may be transferred to the discharge lounge on the morning of discharge to allow other patients to be admitted for their operations. Refreshments are available in the discharge lounge.

Visiting

The main hospital visiting hours are 8.00am to 8.00pm. Information about visiting times for each ward is displayed at or near to the ward entrance. If you are unsure please speak to the nurse in charge. **We limit visitors to 2 per patient, and also ask that your visitors do not bring children under the age of 12.**

Where can I find further information?

The Sheffield Teaching Hospitals website has a wide range of leaflets available to read and download at www.sth.nhs.uk.

Pre-operative advice and videos can also be found by following the link on the A-Z index for Pre-operative Assessment.

Additional videos can be viewed on the NHS website, www.nhs.uk.

These include information and advice on:

- Specific surgical procedures
- Preparing for your operation
- Getting to the hospital and what to expect from us
- Looking after yourself following your operation

Some commonly used leaflets include:

	PIL No	Title
<input type="checkbox"/>	1293	Stop before your op (stop smoking)
<input type="checkbox"/>	213	You and your anaesthetic*
<input type="checkbox"/>	1371	Reducing your risk of infection
<input type="checkbox"/>	1502	Preventing blood clots
<input type="checkbox"/>		Will I need a blood transfusion (NHS Blood and Transplant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	3117	Getting ready to leave hospital
<input type="checkbox"/>	607	Tell us what you think (compliments and complaints)

*For further details on anaesthetic options and risks, see the Royal College of Anaesthetists website, www.rcoa.ac.uk/clinical-standards-quality/patient-information-leaflets.

You may also find the NHS website www.nhs.uk, a good source of information on health conditions, treatments and services.

Your notes

If you have any questions or concerns about your operation please don't hesitate to speak to us. You may wish to use the space below to make a note of anything you would like to discuss at your pre-operative assessment appointment.

Alternative formats can be available on request. Email: sth.alternativeformats@nhs.net

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