

Preparing for your planned procedure: coronavirus precautions

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

During the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, our staff have been working hard to ensure that all patients receive the care they need, not just those patients with coronavirus.

We have changed how we deliver many of our services so that we only ask you to attend face-to-face services when it is necessary and where it can be done safely without putting you, other patients, or our staff at greater risk of catching coronavirus.

Our clinical teams have reviewed all patients waiting for procedures and we are pleased to be able to schedule more people for planned procedures. We have put many measures in place to make sure that all patients are protected from the virus and would like to reassure you that your procedure can be done safely.

This leaflet will guide you through your visit to hospital during the coronavirus pandemic.

Please note that the guidance in this leaflet may change at short notice in response to national or local developments during the coronavirus pandemic.

Coronavirus in the South West

We have all been asked to stay at home for a long time so it is understandable that leaving your home, even for something as important as going to hospital, can be a worry.

The spread of coronavirus has been different across the country and the South West has had some of the lowest numbers of cases and deaths. In turn, North Devon and Torridge have had some of the lowest numbers in the South West.

The safety of patients and staff is our top priority, so despite these low numbers, we want to reassure you that we have put in place a range of measures at North Devon District Hospital to keep everyone safe from coronavirus.

- Our clinical spaces and waiting areas are less crowded because we are doing more telephone and video appointments, and have limited visitor numbers
- We have separate areas to keep patients who might or do have coronavirus apart from others
- We are carrying out lots of testing

- We practice good hand hygiene and clean all areas frequently
- We wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect staff and patients
- We are supporting staff and patients to be socially distant in communal spaces such as waiting rooms and corridors
- We are asking people to follow the guidance in this leaflet

Before your procedure

There are three things that need to happen before your procedure to ensure everyone's safety:

1. Pre-operative assessment

Pre-operative assessments are part of our regular preparations before many procedures and if we would normally have done a pre-operative assessment before your procedure, this will still go ahead. However, we have changed how we do this to reduce the number of people coming into hospital so your assessment may be carried out by telephone or video. The booking team will discuss this with you.

If you have previously been advised to shield because you are at higher risk of coronavirus complications, your procedure will be discussed with you in advance and, if necessary, extra protection will be put in place. We have a list of people who have been advised to shield, but please mention that you have shielded to the booking team.

2. Swab testing

For adults and children undergoing an operation or endoscopy procedure we will arrange for you to have a swab test three days before you come into hospital for the operation or procedure. This is because some people have coronavirus but don't have any symptoms.

Swab samples are taken from your throat and nose and tested for coronavirus in the laboratory. The swab test is uncomfortable because the samples need to be taken from the back of your throat and nose. The throat swab may make you cough or gag and the nose swab may make you want to sneeze. The discomfort only lasts for a few seconds. The result is usually back within 24 hours.

If your test confirms you don't have coronavirus, and you follow the self-isolation guidance in section 3 we can all be confident that you do not have the virus when it's time for you to come into hospital.

If the result confirms you have coronavirus, we will let you know and will discuss re-booking your procedure as soon as possible.

3. Self-isolation

It is really important that you reduce the likelihood of catching coronavirus before your procedure because the risk of complications during your procedure is higher if you have coronavirus.

To reduce your risk as much as possible, we recommend that you follow current government advice on social distancing and hand-hygiene.

[gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-alert-and-safe-social-distancing)

For adults and children undergoing an operation or endoscopy procedure you should self-isolate immediately after your swab test until you come in to hospital for your operation or procedure. This is based on guidance from NHS England the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

The guidance for self-isolating is similar to the government guidance for people who have coronavirus or live with someone who has coronavirus. This means that you:

- Stay at home immediately after the swab test until you come in to hospital for your operation or procedure.
- Do not go to work, school or public places,
- Do not go shopping attend any gatherings, including outdoor gatherings or those in private spaces
- Do not use public transport
- Strictly avoid contact with anyone who has symptoms of coronavirus

You may attend other necessary medical appointments during this period, such as pre-operative tests.

If you live with other people you can still self-isolate. The people you live with do not need to stay at home. It is important to avoid as much contact with other people as possible in your home in order to reduce the risk of transmitting coronavirus and there is information from the NHS on how to do this: [nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-to-avoid-spreading-coronavirus-to-people-you-live-with/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/how-to-avoid-spreading-coronavirus-to-people-you-live-with/)

We understand that self-isolating can be very difficult. However, it is very important you self-isolate before your procedure to reduce the risk of complications during or after your procedure, which could make you very unwell. We will need to reschedule your procedure if we have concerns that you might have coronavirus when you are due to come into hospital, but we will make sure that it is re-booked as soon as possible.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable and have previously shielded, or if you are elderly or are of a black, Asian or other minority ethnic group you may want to self-isolate for 14 days prior to your operation or procedure.

When you arrive

On the day of your procedure, please come wearing a face covering.

Please arrive at the time stated on your appointment letter. We will ask you to arrive in plenty of time for your procedure, to allow time for clinical staff to see you beforehand. We will schedule your attendance to reduce the amount of time you are waiting as much as possible.

You will be directed to a 'green' area of the hospital, where all the patients will have been tested and staff will have been checked before they start work.

You will be offered a mask to wear instead of your face covering. Your temperature will be checked and you will be asked if you have had any symptoms of coronavirus in the last four weeks including:

- A new continuous cough
- A high temperature
- Altered or loss of sense of taste or smell

It is really important that you tell us if you have symptoms as your risk of complications may be higher if you have coronavirus. If you start to show coronavirus symptoms, you will be immediately isolated and your procedure rescheduled.

We will schedule your attendance to reduce the amount of time you are waiting as much as possible. For some procedures, you will still need to arrive quite early to allow time for clinical staff to see you beforehand.

During and after your procedure

Many procedures are performed under local or regional anaesthetic. If you are awake for your procedure, you will be asked to wear a mask unless the procedure is on an area of your face that makes this impossible.

We will try to perform as many procedures as possible in outpatients or as day surgery so that you do not need to stay in hospital overnight.

If you need to stay overnight, you will go to a 'green' ward, where all patients have been screened, and we will help you to go home as soon as possible.

If you are going to a care home, Community hospital or hospice after being in hospital you will be tested for coronavirus before you leave hospital. If the result of the test is positive, the care home will make arrangements to prevent the virus from spreading to other residents or staff, following national guidance.

Please arrange for a relative or friend to take you home as soon as you are ready to leave hospital following your operation or procedure.

You may wish to take additional precautions against coronavirus in the period after your surgery to reduce the risk of complications while you are recovering.

Further information

NICE Guideline "Covid-19 rapid guideline: arranging planned care in hospitals and diagnostic services: [nice.org.uk/guidance/NG179](https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/NG179)

FAQs from the Centre for Perioperative Care: [cproc.org.uk/patients/guidance-patients-having-operation-during-covid-19](https://www.cproc.org.uk/patients/guidance-patients-having-operation-during-covid-19)

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

© Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.
Tel: 01271 313970 / email: ndht.contactus@nhs.net