



Having an operation

Information for patients coming to the Royal Free London for surgery

This booklet answers common questions about having an operation at one of our hospitals.

It will help you to prepare for your stay in hospital and to make arrangements for going home. You may also be given leaflets specific to your surgery.

You can also watch our short video explaining what to expect on the day of your operation here:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/on-the-day-of-your-operation

Bring this booklet with you when you come in for your pre-operative assessment appointment and operation.

Contents

Pre-operative assessment appointment 4

When will I next hear from you?

I can't keep my appointment as I am busy or unwell

Preparing for your admission 6

What will I need during my hospital stay?

Do I need to do anything to prepare for my surgery?

Is there anything I shouldn't do before my surgery?

Eating and drinking – fasting instructions

Taking my usual medications

Record of tests ordered at pre-assessment

Day surgery 12

Is there anything that I need to be aware of?

On arrival to the day surgery unit

What will happen on the day?

After the operation

Going home after day surgery

Overnight admissions 16

What do I need to bring with me?

Am I allowed to bring someone with me?

On arrival to the surgical admissions area

What will happen on the day?

After the operation

Going home after an overnight admission

Information about where to come on the day 20

General information 21

Pre-operative assessment appointment

Most patients coming in for a planned operation must have a pre-operative assessment appointment before the operation can go ahead. This is commonly known as a pre-assessment.

Our pre-assessment clinics are nurse-led with support from the anaesthetic department. At your appointment, a nurse will assess your suitability for surgery and ask you questions about your general health and medical history. They will carry out any tests you may need such as blood tests or an ECG (electrocardiogram). They will also give you information about your operation and hospital stay, including how long you can expect to be in hospital for.

We need to make sure that it is safe for you to have a general anaesthetic or sedation, so if required, we won't be able to go ahead with your operation until you have had your pre-assessment.

You do not need to fast before your pre-assessment. Please bring all your regular medicines and any recent hospital letters or records with you to your appointment.

When will I next hear from you?

Once you have had your pre-assessment, our surgical admissions team will write to you giving you the date of your surgery if you have not already received this.

Please confirm that you can attend the hospital for your operation on that date by calling the surgical admissions team directly, using the number on your letter.

Your letter will usually ask you to attend the hospital at 7.30am on the day of your operation. There is a chance that between one to four days before your surgery, a pre-assessment nurse or a member

of the admissions team will call you and give you a different time to attend – this will be because we have seen the operating list and know that you are not scheduled to have surgery until later in the day. By asking you to arrive later, we want to prevent you from experiencing a long wait on the unit.

I can't keep my appointment as I am busy or unwell

Call us as soon as possible using the telephone number on your letter if you cannot keep any of your appointments, you become unwell or you develop a cough or cold.

Another patient may be able to benefit from your appointment slot.

Preparing for your operation

Before coming in for your operation, plan ahead and think about how you will manage while you are in hospital and when you first leave:

Arrange to take time off work, school or college after the procedure

In all cases, you will also need to take the day after your operation off, so please make arrangements with your work, school or college if necessary.

For procedures that have a longer recovery time, you will need to arrange a longer period of absence.

Make arrangements to travel to and be collected from the hospital

You must be collected from the hospital and we recommend you travel home by car or taxi if possible. We discourage you from travelling by public transport as you will still be recovering from the effects of the operation and anaesthetic.

Make arrangements for any dependent relatives or your pets to be cared for while you are in hospital

Our units and ward areas are busy clinical environments. We do not have facilities for dependants to stay with you while you are waiting for surgery. Please ensure you make appropriate arrangements for the duration of your hospital stay.

Arrange for someone to stay with you for 24 hours after you have been discharged

You must have someone available to stay with you for 24 hours after your operation while you recover from the anaesthetic and surgery. We may have to cancel your operation if you don't.

If you drive, check your car insurance is not affected by your surgery

Let your GP know you are coming into hospital

What will I need during my hospital stay?

Please bring:

- any medicines you are taking, including inhalers, your steroid card and warfarin book (if you have these)
- the name and phone number of your escort and next of kin
- comfortable loose-fitting clothes to wear in hospital and to go home in
- well-fitting slippers or shoes with non-slip soles
- something to help pass the time, such as a book
- glasses, dentures and walking/hearing aids if required
- toiletries if you are staying in hospital overnight.

Please do not bring:

- any jewellery, valuables or large amounts of money
- large bags or suitcases.

The Royal Free London will not accept responsibility or liability for any loss or damage to a patient's property, under any circumstances, unless it has been handed in and signed for by a member of hospital staff.

Do I need to do anything to prepare for my surgery?

It is important to follow these personal hygiene instructions before coming into hospital to help protect you from developing an infection after surgery:

1. Have a shower or bath the night before and on the morning of your operation.
2. If you were given antiseptic wipes during your pre-assessment, after drying with a clean towel, use the wipes on your neck,

chest, arms, legs, perineum, buttocks (do not use internally) and back, if reachable – use 4 wipes the night before and 4 wipes the morning of your procedure. Let your body air dry – your body will feel sticky for a few minutes as the wipes take effect.

3. If you are having foot surgery, please use the additional wipes on both feet on the morning of your operation.

Please also:

- Remove any nail varnish, make up, body piercings and jewellery – you may still wear your wedding ring.
- You may wear a hearing aid or glasses, but not contact lenses. Bring equipment for your lenses if you wear them.

Is there anything I shouldn't do before my surgery?

Do not:

- drink alcohol the night before your operation
- smoke for 12 hours before your operation
- women who are sexually active should use a reliable form of contraception (not condoms) or abstain for the time between your last period and the operation date. Exposure to anaesthetic can be harmful to an unborn child.

Eating and drinking – fasting instructions

Patients who are having a general anaesthetic or sedation should not eat and drink for a period beforehand because of the risk of vomiting under the anaesthetic. However, long periods of fasting are unnecessary and can make you dehydrated, thirsty and hungry.

We ask that you follow these rules for eating and drinking:

You should not eat any food for six hours before your operation. Time for last food:

You may drink liquids* up until two hours before your operation. Time for last drink of clear fluids:

*The following liquids are okay to have:

- water (still or sparkling)
- tea or coffee without milk or cream.

Drinks containing milk (eg smoothies or tea/coffee with milk) should not be taken for six hours before your operation.

If you have not been given a time for your operation please assume it will be no earlier than 8.30am. We encourage you to have a drink of water before you leave home to prevent you from becoming thirsty, and to bring a bottle of water with you when you come to the hospital.

Taking my usual medication

Please check whether or not you should continue taking your prescribed medicines. Tablets are not considered to be food and if instructed you should take them before you leave home with a glass of water.

Please do not take the following medicines on the day of your procedure:

Some medications (such as some blood thinners and blood pressure medication) need to be stopped in advance of surgery. Please follow the instructions below if appropriate:

Record of tests ordered at your pre-assessment

Your nurse will tick all that apply to you.

Blood tests	Full blood count	U&E	Group and save*
	Clotting	Glucose	Other
Swabs	MRSA – nose	MRSA – perineum	Other
Tests	ECG	MSU	Other
Other tests required			

*If you need to have a group and save blood test, this needs to be carried out in the blood test unit in the hospital where you'll be having surgery. Your pre-assessment nurse will let you know if this is the case.

Day surgery

If your operation requires only a short stay in hospital it can take place as a 'day case'. What this means is most patients are discharged home on the same day of their operation.

Is there anything that I need to be aware of?

Please make sure you have made the following arrangements:

- You have someone available to escort you home from hospital and to stay with you for the first 24 hours after your operation – we will have to cancel your operation if you don't.
- You've made any necessary care arrangements for dependents, as our hospitals are very busy clinical environments and we do not have facilities for dependents to stay while you have surgery.
- You have taken the necessary amount of time after your operation off from work, school or college.
- A list of things you need to bring with you to hospital is available on page 7 of this booklet – please also bring in a dressing gown.

On arrival to the day surgery unit

When you arrive in the day surgery unit, please check-in at reception. Tell the receptionist if any of your personal details (eg your address, contact details, GP or next of kin) have changed and they will be happy to update your file.

We don't have a waiting area or facilities for accompanying friends, relatives or children in our day surgery units. Anyone providing an

escort home is welcome to take the contact telephone number of the unit and nursing staff will provide an estimated pick-up time. If for any reason this changes, a member of staff will contact your escort.

What will happen on the day?

Nurses in our day surgery units are specially trained to care for patients having day case procedures. A nurse will introduce themselves to you when you arrive and will advise you how long you can expect to wait before going to the operating theatre. They will also prepare you for your operation by taking your blood pressure, pulse rate and temperature. You will need to change into a hospital gown and put on the supplied compression stockings shortly before your operation.

We will have asked you to come into hospital at a particular time as we try to estimate as accurately as possible the time of your operation. Occasionally, for example if your surgeon would like to see you before they enter the operating theatres or if we have an emergency case, you may have to wait. We always endeavour to keep you informed if there is a change to the schedule and we appreciate your patience. Please bring in a book or something to keep you entertained while you wait. Ask your nurse to store any valuables before you go for your procedure.

If your surgeon has called you in early, they will visit you at some point before they enter the operating theatres. They may talk to you about the operation and ask you to sign a consent form giving your permission for the procedure to go ahead. They may also mark your skin with a pen to highlight the operation site. If you have any questions about the procedure, please do not hesitate to ask.

Your anaesthetist may also visit you before your operation. They will discuss the medicines they intend to use to put you to sleep and what pain relief you will have after the operation.

Having an anaesthetic

More information about having an anaesthetic and the different types of anaesthesia is available on our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/anaesthetics

After the operation

After the operation you will wake up in the recovery area of the operating theatres. A recovery nurse will check your vital signs regularly, including your blood pressure, and take care of you until you are able to return to the day surgery unit.

When you first come round from an anaesthetic you may feel woozy and disorientated. Some patients also feel sick or have a dry mouth and sore throat. Please tell us if you experience any of these symptoms, or if you have any pain, as we are able to give you medicine to help relieve this.

Once back on the day surgery unit you will be able to have something to eat and drink.

Try to follow these simple steps to help you re-adjust after your operation and keep you safe:

- Take slow deep breathes if you are able to – this helps prevent chest infections after surgery.
- Do some gentle leg exercises such as rotating and flexing your foot – this helps prevent blood clots after surgery.

Going home after day surgery

The nurses on the unit will decide when you are ready to go home and will provide you with a discharge letter and other information or advice you need. Please ask your escort to collect you from the day surgery unit.

In some circumstances, for example if your procedure takes longer than anticipated or you take longer to recover following the procedure, we may need to keep you in hospital overnight – if this is the case, our staff will contact your escort and let them know what's happening.

For the first 24 hours at home do not:

- drive, operate machinery, use a cooker, ride a bicycle, sign a legal document or engage in any activity requiring skill or judgement
- take sleeping tablets
- drink alcohol.

Once at home

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please contact the hospital where you had surgery or your GP practice for advice:

- increased pain or swelling
- a temperature
- bleeding in the area where you had surgery
- difficulty passing urine.

Our contact details are provided on pages 20 and 21 of this booklet.

In the unlikely event of an emergency visit your nearest emergency department, taking your discharge letter with you.

Overnight admissions

Some operations have a longer post-op recovery time – what this means is you'll need at least an overnight stay in hospital to recover after your operation. At your pre-assessment your nurse will give you an idea of your expected length of stay in hospital.

Generally, we will ask you to come into our surgical admissions area on the day of your operation. After your operation, you will be transferred to a ward or back to the admissions area to recover until you are medically fit to leave the hospital.

What do I need to bring with me?

We encourage our patients, where possible, to be dressed during the day and take an active part in their recovery from surgery. Please make sure you bring in comfortable loose-fitting clothes for the day, well-fitting slippers or shoes with non-slip soles, toiletries and glasses, dentures and walking/hearing aids if required.

A full list of what to bring with you into hospital is available on page 7 of this booklet. Please do not bring in any valuables.

After your surgery, a nurse will collect your belongings from the admissions area and bring them to you. We have small bedside lockers where you can store your belongings. Please do not bring in any large bags or suitcases as space in the admissions area and on our wards is very limited.

Am I allowed to bring someone with me?

You can ask a relative or friend to come with you.

Unfortunately we do not have a waiting area or facilities for them to wait with you on the admissions area, so they will be required to leave once you are settled. Each of our hospitals has a restaurant and cafe where they are able to wait should they wish to. Please

see page 22 for more information.

On arrival to the surgical admissions area

When you arrive in the admissions area, please check-in at reception. Tell the receptionist if any of your personal details (eg your address, contact details, GP or next of kin) have changed and they will be happy to update your file.

What will happen on the day?

A nurse will introduce themselves when you arrive and will advise you how long you can expect to wait before going to the operating theatre. They will also prepare you for your operation by taking your blood pressure, pulse rate and temperature. You will need to change into a theatre gown and put on the supplied compression stockings shortly before your operation.

We will have asked you to come into hospital at a particular time as we try to estimate as accurately as possible the time of your operation. Occasionally, for example if your surgeon would like to see you before they enter the operating theatres or if we have an emergency case, you may have to wait. We always endeavour to keep you informed if there is a change to the schedule and we appreciate your patience. Please bring in a book or something to keep you entertained while you wait. Ask your nurse to store any valuables before you go for your procedure.

Your consultant, or a member of their team, will visit you before they enter the operating theatres. They will talk to you about the operation and ask you to sign a consent form giving your permission for the procedure to go ahead. They may also mark your skin with a pen to highlight the operation site. If you have any questions about the procedure, please do not hesitate to ask.

Your anaesthetist will also visit you before your operation. They will discuss the medicines they intend to use to put you to sleep and what pain relief you will have after the operation.

Having an anaesthetic

More information about having an anaesthetic and the different types of anaesthesia is available on our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/anaesthetics

After the operation

After the operation you will wake up in the recovery area of the operating theatres. A recovery nurse will check your vital signs regularly, including your blood pressure, and take care of you until you are able to be moved to the admissions area or a ward. Unfortunately we will not know which area you will be moved to until after your operation.

When you first come round from an anaesthetic you may feel woozy and disorientated. Some patients also feel sick or have a dry mouth and sore throat. Please tell us if you experience any of these symptoms, or if you have any pain, as we are able to give you medicine to help relieve this.

Once on the ward you may be able to have something to eat and drink. A nurse will give you an approximate date for when you will be able to leave the hospital (also known as an expected discharge date) within 24-48 hours.

Try to follow these simple steps to help you re-adjust after your operation and keep you safe:

- Take slow deep breathes if you are able to – this helps prevent chest infections after surgery.
- Do some gentle leg exercises such as rotating and flexing your foot – this helps prevent blood clots after surgery.

Going home after your admission

Before leaving the hospital we must ensure that you will be safe. Your healthcare team will decide when you are medically fit to leave the hospital. You may be transferred to our discharge lounge on the day of leaving the hospital while you wait to be collected.

What will I be given to take away with me?

- **Discharge summary letter:** This is a letter giving details of your hospital treatment and the medicines you need. A copy will also be sent to your GP. Keep it safe and show it to those involved in your care.
- **Medicines:** If necessary, we will provide a supply of medicines for up to 14 days only. The pharmacist or nurses on the ward will explain any instructions that you need to follow. Further prescriptions should be obtained from your GP.
- **Equipment:** You may be given equipment to take and use at home, eg walking aids. Someone may need to take these home for you separately.
- **Supplies:** A short-term supply of things you will need at home will be provided, eg stoma or catheter bags, dressings, syringes and needles. Further supplies should be obtained from your GP.

For the first 24 hours after leaving the hospital do not:

- drive, operate machinery, use a cooker, ride a bicycle, sign a legal document or engage in any activity requiring skill or judgement.
- take sleeping tablets
- drink alcohol.

Once at home

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please contact the hospital where you had surgery (our details can be found on page 20) or your GP practice for advice:

- increased pain or swelling
- a temperature
- bleeding in the area where you had surgery
- difficulty passing urine.

In the unlikely event of an emergency visit your nearest emergency department, taking your discharge letter with you.

Information about our day surgery and surgical admissions areas

Whether you are coming in for day surgery or an overnight admission, please make your way to the reception desk in the following areas at the hospital where you will be having your operation.

Barnet Hospital

- The day surgery unit and surgical admissions area can be found on the level 0 opposite the emergency department.
- To contact either area, please call: 020 8216 5353.
- At Barnet Hospital we have a restaurant and cafe which are located on level 0 near the main hospital entrance. There are also vending machines located throughout the hospital.

Chase Farm Hospital

- The day surgery and the surgical admissions areas are located in the day surgery unit next door to our x-ray department.
- To contact either area, please call: 020 8375 1332/1371/1227.
- At Chase Farm Hospital we have a restaurant and cafe. There are also vending machines located in a number of areas in the hospital, including along the Highlands wing corridor.

Royal Free Hospital

- The day surgery unit and the surgical admissions area can be found on the 3rd floor of the hospital.
- To contact either area, please call: 020 7830 2199.
- At the Royal Free Hospital we have a canteen and cafe on the lower ground floor, two food and drink outlets on the ground floor within the hospital and a cafe located just outside the main Pond Street hospital entrance.

General information

Food and drink

Further details about food and drink options at our hospitals is available on our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/food-and-drink-at-our-hospitals

Hospital support services

We have a range of support services available at our hospitals:

Chaplaincy service: A multi-faith team of chaplains is available to support you during your stay. You do not have to think of yourself as religious to seek support.

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS): PALS offer support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors about medical services and hospital care. If you are staying with us, or visiting someone who is, the best person to talk to in the first instance is a member of ward staff or matron of the ward. If you would like to speak get in touch with us, visit our website: www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/pals

Royal Free Charity volunteers: Our hospital volunteers can provide support to patients and visitors on the wards. Find out more here: www.royalfreecharity.org/do/patient-support

Travelling to and parking at our hospitals

Information about travelling to our hospitals and parking at each is also available on our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/getting-to-our-hospitals

Wifi at our hospitals

Free Wi-Fi is available on most of our wards. Select ‘_TheCloud’ from the list of available Wi-Fi networks on your device – you may need to sign up before you can access the service.

Your experience

We want to hear from you about your experience. Your feedback will help us to improve our service and the care we deliver.

When you return home you will receive a telephone call from us asking if you would recommend the hospital to your own friends or family. If you would prefer not to be called, please let a member of nursing staff know. Alternatively you can leave us feedback on Twitter (@RoyalFreeNHS), Facebook or NHS Choices.

Other useful resources:

Online

- Blood tests
www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/blood-tests
- Having an anaesthetic
www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/anaesthetics
- Day surgery
www.royalfree.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/day-surgery
- Staying in our hospital
www.royalfree.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/staying-in-our-hospitals

Leaflets

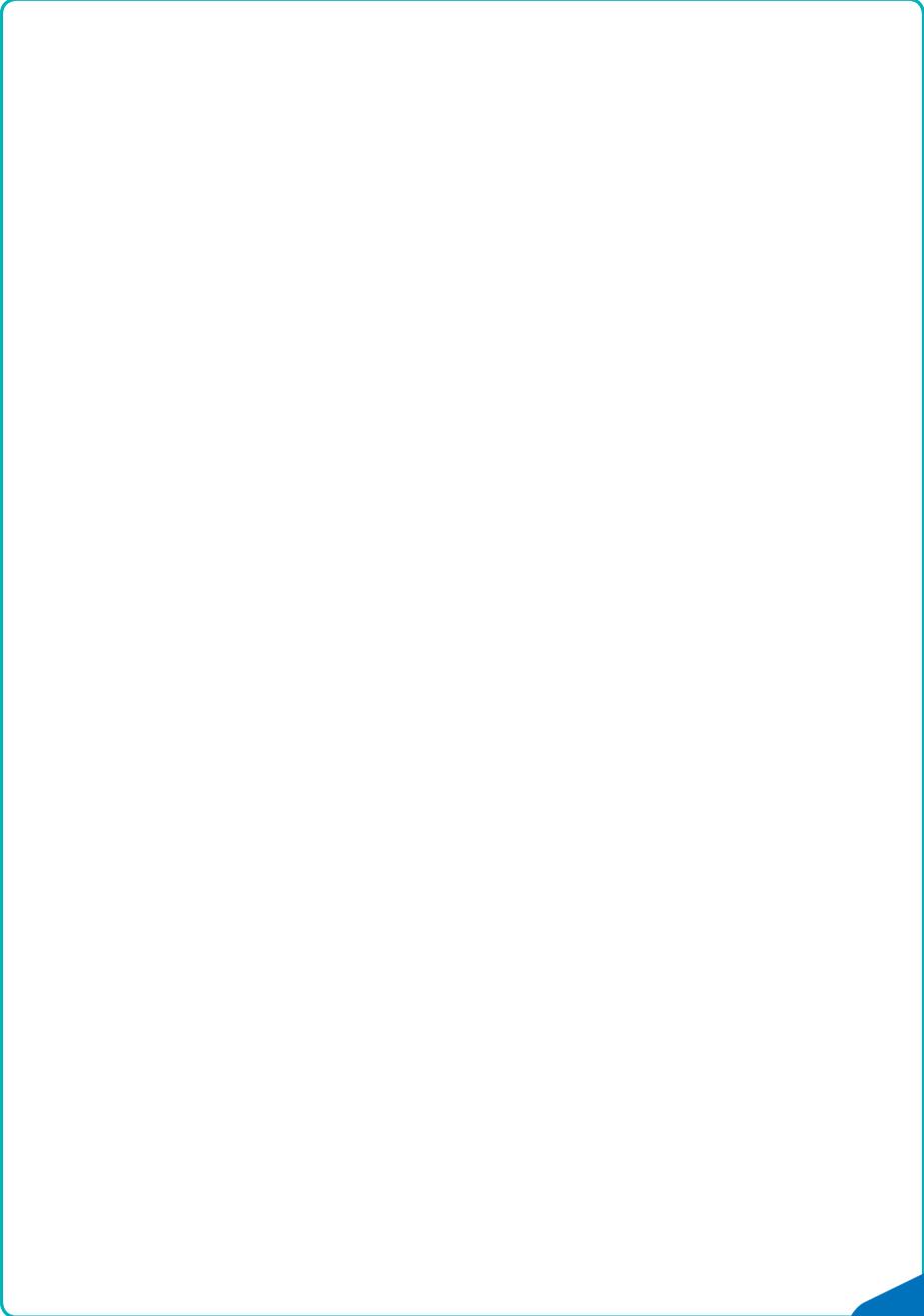
- Patients and staff – partners in reducing infection
- Preparing to leave hospital
- Preventing blood clots in veins

Download our leaflets online here:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/patient-resources

Alternatively, ask a member of staff if you would like a printed leaflet.

Notes



Please stick patient ID sticker here

You have been scheduled to have the following operation/procedure:	
Date of your pre-operative assessment appointment:	
Date of your operation/procedure:	
Your expected length of stay in hospital:	

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or you would like a list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net.

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please ask a member of staff.

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Version number: 1

Approval date: July 2017

Review date: July 2019

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