

## Welcome to Day Surgery

### **What is day surgery and why am I having it?**

Your consultant surgeon has decided that you need an operation. Because your operation requires only a short stay in hospital it can take place on the Day Surgery Unit. 7 out of 10 operations at the Royal Free are now performed as day case surgery due to the improvements in short-acting anaesthesia and advanced surgical techniques. Specialist nurses on the unit care for patients having operations that require only a short stay in hospital.

Most patients are discharged home from the unit after only a few hours. There are a few patients who use our 23-hour overnight facility and who are discharged first thing in the morning the day after their operation. We will tell you if we plan to keep you overnight.

### **I have been told that I need a pre-assessment - what is that?**

All patients having a general anaesthetic must have a pre-assessment appointment before surgery. Nursing staff assess your medical and social suitability for day surgery, and perform any tests you may require. They also give you verbal and written information about your operation.

### **No pre-assessment - no operation!**

We need to ensure that you are safely prepared for a general anaesthetic and surgery so we will not give you a date for an operation until an assessment has been carried out.

### **When will I next hear from you?**

The surgical admissions department will write to you giving you the date for your surgery. You must confirm that you can attend the hospital on that date.

*Please call the team on 020-7830 2849 (direct line).  
They can take your calls Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.*

Your letter will ask you to attend the unit on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at 7.30am on the day of your operation. There is a chance that the day before your surgery a member of the surgical admissions staff will call you and give you a different time to attend the unit. This is because we have seen the operating list and know that you are not scheduled for surgery until later in the day. By asking you to come later we want to prevent you from experiencing a long wait on the unit.

### **I can't keep that appointment as I am busy / feel unwell**

Call us as soon as possible if you cannot keep your appointment. If you become unwell, develop a cough or cold or cannot come to your appointment for any reason, please call us. Another patient may be able to benefit from your cancellation.

Please call the surgical admissions team on 020 7830 2849 (direct line) Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Out of these hours call Day Surgery on 020 7830 2665. (The Day Surgery Unit is open from 7am Monday until 8pm Friday, 24 hours a day.)

### **Do I need to do anything in preparation for my surgery?**

#### *Arrange an escort home from hospital*

You **must** be collected from the Day Surgery Unit. Go home by taxi or car if possible. We discourage you from travelling by public transport because you will still be recovering from the effects of your operation and anaesthetic. Minicabs can be booked at main reception on the ground floor.

#### *Arrange company at home for the first 24 hours after your operation*

*(otherwise we cannot go ahead with the operation)*

You must have someone available to stay with you at home for 24 hours after your operation while you recover from anaesthesia and surgery. You will need to take the day after your operation off work.

#### *All patients*

- **Do not drink alcohol in any quantities the night before your operation**
- **Do not smoke for 12 hours before your operation**
- **Have a shower or bath in the morning before coming in**

#### *Women who are sexually active*

Please 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.

### **The day of your operation**

If you have been asked to come to hospital for 7.30am you may have a small glass of water when you wake at 6am but do not eat anything after midnight including sweets and chewing gum.

Please bring

- any medication that you are taking, including inhalers
- a dressing gown and slippers
- a book/ personal stereo/ something to help pass the time

Please do not bring any valuables with you.

Please remove any nail varnish and make-up, and any body piercing.

Please have a bath or shower on the morning of your operation and use the wipes given to you at your pre-admission appointment. This reduces the risk of infection. (Do not use the wipes on sensitive areas of your body.)

### **Getting here**

We recommend that you come by public transport if at all possible, as parking at the hospital is very limited (charges are £3 an hour, no part hours). Cars can drop

and collect you at the hospital entrance in Pond Street but they cannot double-park or wait there for more than twenty minutes. Most local parking is residents only and any pay-and-display areas are usually full.

### **On arrival**

When you arrive in Day Surgery you should check in at reception. Please tell staff of any changes to your personal details.

Please enter the unit unaccompanied as we have no waiting area or facilities for accompanying friends or relatives. Anyone providing an escort home is welcome to take the contact telephone number and get a guide time from nursing staff as to when to phone later for information.

The hospital has canteen and café facilities on the ground and lower ground floors that can be used by escorts whilst waiting. There are also many shops and cafes near the hospital. A trust-produced booklet called Popski's Papers has local amenities listed and is available from the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) office on the ground floor.

### **How will the day be organised?**

We allocate a named nurse to each patient and he or she will introduce themselves when you arrive and advise how long you can expect to wait before going to the operating theatre.

The operating lists can be all day (8am to 7pm) or morning or afternoon only. We will have asked you to come to hospital at a particular time as we try to estimate as accurately as possible the time of your operation. However sometimes things change - an emergency may take priority on the operating list or a piece of equipment may not be available until a certain time (eg. specialist x-ray equipment) - so we cannot guarantee the exact time of your operation. We will try to keep you informed if there is a change to your schedule.

Sometimes your consultant may have asked us to bring you into hospital early as they wish to see you before they start operating. If this is the case you may well experience a wait.

We have limited facilities and distractions to help pass the time so please bring a book or a personal stereo with you.

The nurse will help you to prepare for the operation. We provide a locker for clothes and other belongings. Patients keep locker keys throughout their stay on the Unit.

Your surgeon will ask you to sign a consent form for the operation and will mark your skin with a pen to highlight the operation site.

Your anaesthetist will discuss the drugs he/she intends to use to put you to sleep and what pain relief you will

have after the operation. Sometimes the anaesthetist will choose to give you a regional block, a type of anaesthetic that numbs a specific area of the body only.

### **After the operation**

After the operation you will wake up in the recovery area of the operating theatres. Once back on the day surgery unit you will be able to have something to eat and drink. The nurses will decide when you are ready to go home.

If you have received a regional block, the nurse will advise you how to care for the affected limb on discharge as you may be vulnerable to injury because sensation and movement of your limb is altered.

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 or drink alcohol

### **Admission overnight - a 23-hour stay**

This is planned in advance because:

- of a medical problem that you have
- you need a particular type of surgery
- you are unable to find anyone to take you home and stay with you

When you stay as a 23-hour patient you will be nursed overnight on a trolley in day surgery. The night staff will help you out of bed early in the morning and prepare you for discharge soon after.

If your surgery is prolonged, complicated or there are unexpected problems you may need to stay overnight in hospital. This may be in the day surgery unit or another ward. In both cases your escort will have to collect you the day after your surgery - staff will contact them if required.

### **Once you are at home**

If you are worried about anything, contact your GP or call the day surgery unit on 020 7830 2665.

In the unlikely event of an emergency go to your nearest Accident and Emergency (A&E) department, taking your discharge letter with you.

NHS Direct is available 24 hours a day for advice on 0845 4647.

**If you would like a large print or audio version of this information, please ask a member of staff.**