

Information for patients and carers

‘Set For Surgery’



Are you 'Set for Surgery'?

This leaflet looks at how we can support you while you are waiting for your surgical procedure to ensure your body is at its best condition.

It is important that you are as well as possible before you have surgery, and you may already be thinking about what you can do to improve your health. This leaflet will show you what you need to focus on and what we can do to support you, so that you are 'Set for Surgery'.

Preparing for Surgery

Patients who are able to improve their health and activity levels before surgery recover much quicker. There is also evidence that they leave hospital sooner and can return to their normal lives faster. Below there is a list that will help improve your health and activity levels. We understand that waiting for your surgery which will ultimately ensure a better standard of living can be frustrating, we want to make sure you are ready when the time comes.

Simple steps to focus on:

Exercise

Your heart and lungs have to work harder after surgery to help the body heal. If you are already active, they will be used to this. While you are waiting for your surgery, try and increase your activity levels. Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, gardening, playing with your children or grandchildren are all helpful.

Try to do any activity which makes you feel out of breath at least three times per week but always check with your doctor first which type of exercise is most appropriate for you. Activities that improve your strength and balance will also be useful for your recovery.

Who can help me?

- Your GP may be able to refer you to an exercise scheme at your local gym. Some people find a personal trainer helpful
- Depending on where you live you may have access to NHS 'health trainers' who can help motivate you and offer advice. There are also a number of mobile apps to help you set goals and track your progress, such as 'Active 10 walking tracker' and 'Couch to 5K'
- Try joining a free council or community walking group or environmental volunteering scheme in your local area such as 'Walks on Prescription'. As well as giving you encouragement and support to start walking and exercising, they are enjoyable and will boost your mood. Ask your GP what is available in your area
- If you have back or joint pain, you will often see a physiotherapist before seeing a consultant. The exercises you do may be more limited, ask your physiotherapist for advice. These are only some ideas, there will be many health and fitness programmes that you can explore in your local area

Diet

Your body needs to repair itself after surgery; eating a healthy diet before and after surgery can really help.

Who can help me?

Your GP should be able to give you some advice and information on healthy eating. NHS Choices can also offer useful help and advice:

www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well

Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. In addition, it can help to:

- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve your blood sugar level
- Reduce pain in your joints
- Reduce your risk of blood clots after surgery
- Reduce your risk of wound infections after surgery
- Allow you to exercise more easily

Who can help me?

Your GP will be able to weigh you and signpost you to advice on healthy eating, any local weight loss schemes and exercise opportunities in your area. NHS Choices can also offer useful help and advice: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well

Some local councils also have schemes that can support you, so it is also worth looking at your local council website or contacting them.

You may find it helpful to join a weight loss class. In some areas NHS health trainers may be available to help you. It has been shown that people who improve their lifestyle in the run up to surgery are much more likely to keep up these changes after surgery. This can have a really positive impact on their health in the long term.

Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery. You can find useful information on how to reduce alcohol and the benefits to you on NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/live-well/alcohol-advice/tips-on-cutting-down-alcohol Also see the drink aware website: www.drinkaware.co.uk

Smoking

Stopping smoking is hard, but the good news is that quitting or cutting down shortly before surgery can reduce your length of stay in hospital, improve wound healing and lung function. Preparing for surgery offers a real opportunity to commit to stopping smoking.

Who can help me?

- Your GP will be able to offer help in reducing or stopping smoking, so ask them about the best options for you
- There may be charities or support groups in your local area
- Smokefree Lancashire help many people and have local facilities in most communities, look at their website for more information and support <https://www.smokefreelancashire.org.uk/>

Medical Conditions

Many medical conditions can affect recovery from surgery. It is important to make sure any known conditions are controlled as well as possible ahead of your surgery. You can also book in for a general health check at your GP, if you are between 40 and 74 years old.

Diabetes: Good control of your blood sugar is really important to reduce your risk of infections after surgery. Think about your diet and weight. Talk to your diabetes nurse or team early to see if they need to make any changes to your treatment.

Blood pressure: Blood pressure should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke. Sometimes operations may be delayed if it is too high. Have your blood pressure checked at your GP practice well ahead of your operation; some have automated machines so you can pop in any time. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation.

Anaemia: (low blood count) If you have been bleeding or have a chronic medical condition, a blood test can check whether you are anaemic. If you are, you should talk to your GP about treatment to improve your blood count before surgery. Treating your anaemia before surgery

reduces the chance of you needing a blood transfusion. It will also help your recovery and make you feel less tired after your surgery. If you have any other long-term medical problems, consider asking your GP or nurse for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be.

Anxiety and mental health: Most people feel some anxiety about having surgery. If the thought of going into hospital is making you very anxious or upset, it may be helpful to talk about your concerns with your GP. In some areas GPs can refer you for specific support. Many techniques including mindfulness, relaxation and breathing exercises or yoga could help you relax before and after your surgery. If you are taking medication for mental health issues it is important to let the nurse at the hospital know. Usually, you will continue to take your medication. The nurse can help organise support you may need for your stay in hospital or your return home.

Dental health: If you have loose teeth or crowns, a visit to the dentist may reduce the risk of damage to your teeth during surgery.

Practical preparation for your operation

We know that coming into hospital for surgery can be a worrying time. Talk to your family and friends about going into hospital and tell them how they can help you. Do not underestimate how tired you may be afterwards. Give the below checklist some thought well in advance of the operation:

- How will I pass the time? Have some headphones and music, books, tablet computer or puzzles. You will need to remember your chargers
- What can I do to relax? Learn some breathing techniques, try yoga or listen to relaxing music. Read about mindfulness
- What do I need to prepare at home? You may find it difficult to move around when you return from hospital; consider sleeping on the ground floor and getting mobility aids

- Who can look after my elderly relatives? If friends and family cannot help, contact your local council and your local carer service <https://carers.org>
- How will I get to and from the hospital? Can someone drive you? If you are eligible for hospital transport, the hospital may be able to organise transport for you
- Do I have enough easy-to-cook meals and healthy snacks for when I get home? Think who might be able to help prepare meals or help with your shopping afterwards
- Who can look after my children or pets? Do not underestimate how tired you might feel after the operation. Ask friends and family to help or to be on standby. To help you with childcare, they may need to arrange time off work too. If you have significant difficulties looking after your children following an operation, talk to your local council or your health visitor
- Do I have enough medication and batteries for my hearing aid to last me in hospital and when I get home? Remember to take your usual medication into hospital with you
- Do I have some over-the-counter painkillers at home? You may need to take some during your recovery as instructed by the hospital
- What do I need to pack? If you are staying in hospital overnight you should think about toiletries, nightwear and comfortable clothes and footwear. It is important to get out of bed, get dressed and start to move as soon as your operation allows; those who do this get home sooner and recover more quickly. Temperatures in hospital can vary so some layers of clothing can be useful
- See NHS Choices for further information: www.nhs.uk/conditions/having-surgery/preparation
- Who should I let know I am going into hospital? Family and friends can usually give you practical support. It is also good to have people to talk with whilst you are at home recovering. Many people will want to help your recovery, so let them know how they can help in plenty of time

Make sure you have a shower/bath before going to hospital to minimise the risk of infection.

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/veteran-aware

<https://bepartofresearch.nihr.ac.uk/>

This leaflet includes text taken from the Royal College of Anaesthetics (RCOA) Leaflet 'Fitter, Better, Sooner 2018, but the RCOA have not reviewed as a whole.



Simple steps to keep you safe during your hospital stay – Lancashire Teaching Hospitals



Simple steps to keep you safe during your hospital stay – information leaflet

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking this will include Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal and the opportunity to speak to a nurse or advisor from the specialist Tobacco and Alcohol Care Team.

If you want to stop smoking, you can also contact Smokefree Lancashire on Freephone **08081962638**.

Please ask a member of staff if you would like help in understanding this information.

This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.

Our patient information group review our leaflets regularly, if you feel you would like to feedback on this information or join our reading group please contact on email address:

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