

General Surgery

Surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic

COVID-19

COVID-19 is a new type of virus that's been affecting some people across the world. It's sometimes called **coronavirus**.

If you think you may have COVID-19 you should check your symptoms using NHS 111. **Do not** go to your GP or come into hospital unless directed to by a health professional. If you are unwell in any way:

1. Use NHS 111 - It has a questionnaire to help work out if you might have COVID. This can be done online or over the phone.
2. Call us and tell us you are waiting for surgery and are feeling unwell.
 - a) If you might have COVID-19 – You must not come to hospital for surgery. Follow the instructions on NHS 111.
 - b) If you probably do not have COVID-19 but are unwell anyway, it is usually best to delay your surgery until you are feeling better. We will rearrange your operation.

Is it safe to have surgery right now?

We are safely performing surgery at UHCW and have been doing so throughout the pandemic. We now want to start treating patients who are not critically unwell too. We have therefore established pathways of care focusing on minimising the risk of catching COVID-19. We would not be offering surgery to you if we did not feel it was safe to do so.



There is a lot we do not know for certain about COVID-19, as it is an entirely new disease in humans. There are three things you may want to consider when deciding to have surgery during this time:

1. Some of the hospital's resources that would normally look after patients having major surgery may have been diverted to fighting COVID-19.
2. Having surgery in a hospital that is treating people for COVID-19 means you risk getting the infection. We take strict precautions to prevent this, but we cannot guarantee it.
3. We do not know for certain, but having COVID-19 while recovering from major surgery may make your recovery more difficult or complicated.

What you need to know about COVID-19

Before you decide to have surgery, you should ask:

- What are the risks related to the specific operation I will be having?
- What other risks do I face given my personal situation (such as other health problems)? We will talk about this in more detail if you have a pre-operative assessment
- What is the risk to me if I develop COVID-19 after the operation?

The answers to these questions will be different for each person and you will need to talk about your individual risks with your surgeon.

What effect has COVID-19 had on how we deliver care?

Most people who develop the disease do not need to come into hospital. However, some of those who do, go on to need intensive care support. Therefore, we may need to expand our intensive care provision for COVID-19 and this may reduce the amount of surgery we can offer. At UHCW we believe we have enough capacity to provide services for both COVID-19 and non COVID-19 related healthcare, in physically separate theatres and intensive care units. After some operations, we may plan for you to go to intensive care afterwards. This will always be in a separate intensive care unit that does not manage COVID-19 cases.

Patient Information

As COVID-19 is highly infectious, and people become contagious before they start to show symptoms, we therefore take precautions in all patients:

- Relatives cannot be allowed into hospital for your planned surgery to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.
- You will be tested for COVID-19 before being admitted for surgery so that we can provide a pathway of care as free of COVID-19 infection as possible for all patients.
- The staff looking after you will also have been tested for COVID-19 and we aim to have an extremely low risk of COVID-19 infection amongst staff during your care.
- You will see staff routinely wearing facemasks and eye protection.
- In operating theatres, people may wear specialised facemasks, visors or goggles, and full-length gowns. It may be difficult to recognise people and sometimes be difficult to understand them. Please say if you can't understand what people are saying.

At present, we are performing planned operations on the University Hospital Coventry site and in Rugby St Cross Hospital, but we also have use of the neighbouring BMI Meriden hospital (on the same campus) and the Nuffield Hospital in Leamington Spa. These hospitals will be providing NHS services run by this Trust and be able to do operations on sites that do not have the pressures of managing COVID-19 cases.

Different hospital sites have different support systems in place to protect you if there are problems after your operation, and so may not be suitable for everyone. You will have a Pre-operative Assessment before your surgery which will recommend which site would be suitable for you. This is particularly important while we are using facilities in the BMI Meriden and Nuffield hospitals.

If you have any further questions about your operation, please contact your surgical team. The contact number should be on your appointment letter, alternatively telephone the main hospital switchboard on 024 7696 4000.

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this Information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 6352 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

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