Having surgery during the COVID-19 Pandemic

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

You need to consider the benefits and risks when deciding whether to have surgery at any time. There are additional risks to think about now because of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

IS IT SAFE TO COME TO HOSPITAL?

There is a risk as COVID-19 is extremely infectious and is believed to spread by person-to-person contact. We are doing everything we can to make sure the infection risk in hospital is low. We look after COVID-19 patients in separate areas, staff use personal protective equipment (PPE) and we have rigorous cleaning schedules. We are unable to maintain physical distancing when operating and providing medical treatment and care however our staff wear appropriate PPE to keep both themselves and you safe.

WHAT IF I GET COVID-19?

If you do get a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, it is likely your procedure will be delayed or cancelled and you may need additional tests and hospitalisation. You may require Intensive Care treatment. You may need to be sedated (given a drug to make you sleep), have a tube put in into your airway and be attached to a ventilator that will breathe for you. There may also be other possible complications that we do not currently know about. There is a risk that you could die. We do know that people with underlying health conditions are at greater risk. If your procedure cannot be postponed due to medical reasons, then additional precautions will be taken to protect staff and other patients.

DELAYING SURGERY

If you are unsure about whether you want to proceed with surgery you should contact your consultant’s secretary and they will make arrangements for further discussion with you. You should consider the risk of delaying your surgery until the pandemic is over against having surgery now, as this could be many months.

PREPARING FOR SURGERY

We will be asking you to self-isolate prior to your surgery. The exact length of time you will asked to self isolate may vary depending on your current medical health and the type of surgery you will be having. Your doctor will discuss this with you. If you have been asked to self isolate for 14 days before your surgery, you must do so. If you are asked to only self isolate immediately after your COVID-19 swab test (usually 2-4 days before your surgery) then you will also be expected to limit social contact with others out with your household for the previous 10-12 days before your COVID-19 swab test (depending on date of swab test before surgery). These requirements are to further limit the likelihood of you having COVID-19.

Self isolation means you should remain at home and should not go to work, school, public areas or use public transport. You should not go out to buy food or other essentials. You must stay at home. Other members of your household can continue to go to work, shops, school etc, but we would ask that they limit their social contact for the period of your isolation as much as possible and avoid having visitors in your home. During the pandemic some additional local and or national restrictions may be in place, please ensure you are clear on what the Scottish Government is advising while you are preparing for your surgery.
While you are self-isolating, you should:

- Stay at home
- Avoid contact with anyone with symptoms of Coronavirus/COVID-19
- Wash your hands regularly with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Try and stay at least 2 metres away from other people at all times, this includes members of your household
- Have someone else do your shopping and collect essentials like prescriptions
- Keep in touch with friends and family using technology

**Testing**

You will get a nose/throat swab taken 2-4 days before surgery. If you have your own car you will be asked to drive yourself to have a swab taken.

**Will testing help?**

Testing is not 100% accurate; a test may fail to detect the virus, or you may even contract it after testing and you may not experience or display any signs or symptoms. You have a higher chance of surgical complications including death if you have COVID-19.

**Coming to hospital**

Wear a face covering and do not use public transport. If you drive, your passenger should sit in the back of the vehicle; if you are the passenger, you should sit in the back of the vehicle.

Shielding has now been paused. If new information becomes available regarding shielding, new information will be given by your clinical team.

Try to only travel with a member of your household, but if this is not possible another friend or family member can drive you as long as both parties follow the advice to wear a face covering and maintain good hand hygiene with hand washing and/or alcohol gel. We also advise you to sit in the back seat of the car.

One family member, carer or an advocate from your household can accompany you as far as the entrance to the Day Surgery Unit where you will be met by nursing staff.

Alternative arrangements will have been discussed with you at your Pre-Assessment appointment if you do not drive.

**After surgery**

You may need to isolate whilst you recover from surgery. Your surgical team will discuss this with you.

**Consent**

It is important that you understand the possible complications of your proposed surgery and the increased risk of the significant and life threatening complications associated with COVID-19.

You will be able to discuss any concerns with the surgical team before having your surgery.