

Ophthalmology – Cataract Surgery

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

Guidance for Patients

Our waiting list is typically five months long for routine cataract operations. Once you have been booked for surgery by the doctor in the clinic, you may not hear anything for three or four months, as the final operating list running orders are not decided until four to six weeks before surgery. You will be telephoned by our booking team a few weeks before your operation to give you a suitable date, and you will then receive confirmation in the post.

You will be asked to visit the eye clinic at Frimley Park or the Aldershot Centre for Health about two weeks before the operation to attend a pre-assessment clinic. At this clinic you will see either an orthoptist or a specialist nurse. You will have the opportunity to ask them questions about the operation.

The purpose of this visit is to have your eyes measured and ensure you are fit and prepared for the surgery. Both your eyes are measured to calculate the power of the lens implant to be inserted for first eye surgery and second eye surgery if that is also planned. This measurement is called biometry. Biometry is carried out by shining a light on the eye to measure the curvature of the cornea, the depth of the anterior chamber, the lens thickness and the exact length of the eye. The measuring procedure is not painful and your eye will feel normal afterwards. Dilating drops are not usually required at this visit.

Contact Lens Wearers

Contact lenses temporarily change the shape of your cornea and need to be removed before measurements to ensure accuracy. If you wear contact lenses you should not wear them at all for ideally 2 weeks and minimum 1 week (soft lenses) or ideally 4 weeks and minimum 2 weeks (gas permeable) before biometry. You may wear them again after biometry.

Previous Laser Refractive Surgery

This affects the biometry measurements. If you have had laser surgery (LASIK, LASEK, PRK) it is imperative that you make every effort to supply us with the pre and post-operative eye and optician readings that were taken at the time of the surgery.

Blood pressure will be checked and if you have diabetes, a blood sample will be needed to check your sugar levels. If either of these are found to be too high, surgery may have to be postponed.

At the preoperative assessment, please remember to bring a list of all your usual tablets and eye drops with you. Please also bring your current reading and distance spectacles, and your most recent spectacle prescription.

Usually you will be awake for your operation. If you require a general anaesthetic for your surgery (i.e. you need to be put to sleep by an anaesthetist), you will need a separate assessment on the same day after your eye measurements, in a separate part of the hospital, for a more detailed general health examination (e.g. a tracing of the heart rhythm called an ECG)

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What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Contact Us

In some areas, we are experiencing a significant backlog following our response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We are doing everything we can to reduce this backlog including putting on extra clinics and theatre lists and opening additional sites to offer these services. We have also increased the ways we can offer appointments including offering more video and telephone appointments (as well as face to face appointments where appropriate).

Please can we request that you **do not contact your GP practice about waiting times**, as they do not have access to this information.

If you have any concerns or questions please use the contact details on your hospital letter, or if you do not have a letter with these contact details please contact our [Patient Advice & Liaison teams](#).

Keep Moving

Reducing your weight and getting active are two of the most powerful things you can do for your body and for your mind. Extra weight places additional strain on your lungs and heart, making it harder for the body to cope with surgery and respond to diseases, including COVID-19

Eating a healthy diet will help you get fit and recover quicker after surgery. Being a healthy weight also reduces your risk of blood clots and wound infections afterwards.

[Visit our weight management page for details of local support available.](#)

Improve Your Health

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone which has caused a lot of people to think more seriously about their health. If you have decided this is the right time for you to make changes check out

www.nhs.uk/live-well and www.nhs.uk/oneyou/

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They can also provide some inspiration for you and your family. The Trust has access to many resources which may help you in making healthier choices, these can be accessed [here](#).

Good Mental Health

Mental health issues will affect 1 in 4 people at some point in their life. Although FHFT does not itself provide urgent mental health specialist services, we are keen that you can access help and support when you need it. Please visit [FHFT website](#) where you can access links to Mental Health support in the local area.

Ongoing health conditions

About 15 million people in England have an ongoing health condition.

Long-term conditions or chronic diseases are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example: diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis and hypertension (high blood pressure).

If you are living with one of these ongoing health conditions, there are many ways in which you can [look after yourself](#).