

## Cardiology & Cardiothoracic Surgery: First Appointment

### Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability of the NHS to provide some routine 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.

You don't need to ring your GP, or the hospital caring for you for an update on waiting times because all the information is available on the My Planned Care website.

This guidance has been supported by clinicians who are responsible for your care to support and to help keep you well whilst waiting for your procedure.

### Guidance for Patients

You will be contacted by your trust for your first appointment, while you wait do please read the remainder of this leaflet for more information on what can be done to support yourself.

If you have any specific concerns about your surgery, you are advised to contact your cardiology team for support.

### How you can support yourself while you wait for your procedure

There are things you can do whilst you wait for your procedure to make you sure you are as healthy and strong as you can be. This will increase your chances of a better recovery. In the time leading up to your procedure, be sure to take good care of yourself by taking a few smart steps. This can help you avoid complications. Follow these simple tips to ensure the best possible outcome and prepare for a successful recovery.

### Take Your Medication

You will be advised to continue with your normal medications, but you may be advised to stop some medications before your procedure, your clinician or pre-operative nurse will provide you with this information.

### Improve Your Health

- Stick to healthy foods - Your body needs good nutrition to fight infection and heal following your procedure.
- Avoid dehydration - drink at least six-eight glasses of fluid per day, preferably water.
- Avoid constipation - drink plenty of fluids and increase the amount of fibre in your diet. If this does not help you can attend your local pharmacy for over-the-counter remedies.

## Smoking

If you are coming into hospital for a procedure, and you are a smoker, we strongly advise you to stop smoking as soon as possible because this will help to improve wound healing, lung function and you will make the best possible recovery. Now is a better time than ever to stop smoking. Smoking before procedure puts you at a higher risk for post-operative heart attacks, stroke, blood clots, pneumonia and even death.

With help, you're much more likely to quit smoking than if you use willpower alone. Visit [Make Smoking History](#) to get free access to the latest quitting aids, one-to-one advice and [support in your local area](#)

## Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on your body but importantly it can reduce your body's ability to heal. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits or lower to improve your ability to heal after your procedure.

## Prevention of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) or Pulmonary Embolism (PE) before procedure

There are natural ways and lifestyle changes you can make to lower your risk of developing blood clots, these include:

- Staying active: make a point of moving every 30-60 minutes to ensure you keep your blood flowing
- Regular exercise – simply walking for 30 minutes a day is a great way to keep your circulation moving
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Keep hydrated.

Your doctor will assess your risk of developing a blood clot when you come into hospital and order a treatment plan to minimise your risk. This may include prescribed medications before or after procedure, or when you go home, to prevent blood clots.

## Keep Moving

Exercise regularly. Among other benefits, better fitness levels reduce complications when having any procedure. This allows you to leave hospital and return to your normal quality of life more quickly.

Keeping an active lifestyle is good for your health and if you are normally an active person it is important to keep that up before your procedure. People with low activity levels can improve their fitness levels within as little as 4 weeks. This gives you an opportunity to get fitter before your procedure and improve your chances of a better and quicker recovery.

Use this tool to [find out your BMI](#) . If it's too high, you may need to consider trying to lose some weight in order to optimise your surgery.

You can download a [free NHS weight loss planning app](#) to help you start healthier eating habits, be more active and start losing weight.

## Good Mental Health

It is normal to be anxious about having a procedure, relaxation, mindfulness, and breathing exercises can all help. It's important that you ask for help if you feel you need it, and your GP practice can advise you on support in your local area.

Please keep in touch with your GP or mental health professional if you are already under their care for depression or anxiety.

Here you will find some [general information on mental health issues](#) and some [top tips to improve your mental wellbeing](#). Apps to support your health, mental health, and wellbeing:

- Find tested and approved mental health apps [here](#).
- [Feeling anxious?](#)
- [Feeling stressed?](#)
- [Feeling low?](#)
- [Trouble sleeping?](#)

If you do experience any of these issues, we recommend getting in touch with your hospital team. The number and email should be on your last hospital appointment letter.

Alternatively, you can contact your GP practice. Whilst your GP does not have access to the hospital waiting list to get you seen sooner, if your condition is getting worse, they can assess you, give advice and can contact the hospital on your behalf if necessary.

If your condition gets worse but you already have your date for surgery, we recommend getting in touch with your hospital team. The number and email for this should be on the hospital appointment letter.

## General information

Please watch this useful [video](#) from the Royal College of Anaesthetists which offers advice on preparing for a procedure.

There is also some useful information available on North East & North Cumbria Integrated Care System for information about [Who we are | North East and North Cumbria ICS](#)

## What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you feel that there is a change in your condition, please contact your clinical team through the hospital switchboard. If your condition suddenly worsens whilst you are waiting you should seek advice.

## 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](http://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.

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