

General Medicine

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 know when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

Guidance for Patients

It is important that while you are waiting for your outpatient appointment or surgery you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should attend regular reviews at your Doctor's surgery to make sure it remains well controlled.

Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping.

Keeping as Healthy as Possible Whilst You Wait Is The Most Important Thing You Can Do

In Mid and South Essex, we have developed comprehensive and free services that can help you to remain as healthy as you can or even improve your health and wellbeing whilst you wait.

Ensuring that you play your part by staying as healthy as you can, will give you the best treatment outcomes when you see your consultant and team.

The Chief Medical Officer for the UK said,

"If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and help treat."

Stay Active with Active Essex

Physical activity and positive movement can come in many different forms, but the benefits are endless. Movement and activity can be anything, it doesn't necessarily mean spending hours at the gym, it could be

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taking small steps, such as ditching the car and travelling actively or meeting up with friends for a walk. The benefits of you doing this, will not only make you feel better in yourself, but will improve your overall health and wellbeing.

Active Essex is the Physical Activity and Sport Partnership for Essex, Southend, and Thurrock, and are one of 43 Active Partnerships in England who work collaboratively with local partners to ensure the power of physical activity and sport can transform lives.

Find Your Active and what you can get involved in here

<https://www.activeessex.org/find-your-active/>

Preparing Well with the Essex Wellbeing Service and Partners

Whilst you await your appointment you can access the Essex Wellbeing Service who are our single point of call for all of wellbeing and health improvement services across Mid and South Essex.

<https://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk/>

The team will provide you with practical, emotional, health and wellbeing advice and support and signpost you to your local services helping Mid and South Essex residents to lead their best possible life, optimising their emotional and physical health.

The friendly team will talk to you about your health and any areas that you would like to improve: for example your weight, or perhaps you want to stop smoking or be more active. The team will also link you into practical advice about debt management, reducing stress and anxiety and how to feel less isolated in the community. The team will connect you in quickly and easily with local free services that are available to you.

Whilst we have provided you with a lot of information here, to talk through your specific health and wellbeing needs and for more information, please call 0300 303 998 or go on the website

<https://www.essexwellbeingservice.co.uk/>

The team are keen to hear from you.

Note: this service does not offer urgent or clinical support

Take Your Medication

Medicines are widely used by the NHS to prevent and treat poor health. When medicines are not taken or used properly, it can lead to poor and worsening health and wellbeing. Before taking any medication, carefully read all the instructions on the label and ask your doctor or pharmacist for help if you are not sure how to take them.

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When it comes to getting the best from our medicines, we all need to know: it's OK to ask.

<https://meandmymedicines.org.uk/>

You need to know:

- ✓ When and how to take them
- ✓ what you should and shouldn't take them with – such as alcohol or food
- ✓ any side effects, both on its own or in combination with any other medication you're taking

What can I do?

- ✓ Learn about your medication
- ✓ Organise and plan your medication
- ✓ Take your medication as prescribed and complete the course

Read the written instructions that accompany your medication and keep in one place – in a drawer or folder – so that you know where to find them. You can also [find information about prescription medication](#) using the electronic Medicines Compendium.

Answers to common question about medicines can be found here: <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/medicines/>

Finding a Pharmacy near you

You can find a pharmacy near you and their opening times by searching on [Find a pharmacy](#)

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.

Mental Health Crisis contact NHS 111 and select option 2

Life Threatening Emergencies

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

What if my health has deteriorated in relation to the condition that I am waiting to be treated for at the hospital?

If you have already booked or attended an outpatient appointment at the hospital and your condition has deteriorated contact the relevant hospital and department:

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Switchboard: **01268 524900**

Broomfield Hospital

Switchboard: **01245 362000**

Southend University Hospital

Switchboard: **01702 435555**

Orsett Hospital

Switchboard: **01268 524900**

St Peter's Hospital

Switchboard: **01621 725323**

Braintree Community Hospital

Switchboard: **01376 555900**

If you do not yet have an appointment with the hospital and your condition has deteriorated contact:

Referral Support Service on 0300 123 0771 (local call rate) between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday and a member of the team will support you with your enquiries

Note: this service does not offer urgent or clinical support, however they will direct you to who you need to speak with about your condition

General Health Advice

Like GPs, community pharmacists are part of the NHS family. Many community pharmacies are open long hours when other health care professionals are unavailable, with immediate access to a pharmacist for help and advice. Pharmacists are able to assess the clinical needs of patients and make appropriate referrals to other NHS services and healthcare professionals when appropriate. GP surgeries are open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. 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.

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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.

Good Mental Health

If you are finding it hard to cope with your mental health problems, it can be helpful to talk to someone about how you are feeling. This section outlines the services we have in place to support your psychological needs

Our local mental health services provide access to a wide range of talking therapy treatments for adults with common mental health problems.

Our services are part of the national initiative Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) and have been accredited in the Accreditation Programme for Psychological Therapy Services (APPTS) by the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Combined Committee for Accreditation.

This FREE service is available to all patients registered with a GP practice in Mid and South Essex and is open to people aged 18 and over (17 and over for Mid Essex Patients).

You can self-refer and don't need to see a GP first.

After your needs are assessed you will be offered the most appropriate care with a trained professional, which may include talking therapy to help you manage your current mental health problem including

- Stress and anxiety
- Sleep problems
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Depression including pre and post-natal
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
- Living with a long term condition such as diabetes, heart disease, chronic pain or IBS.
- Providing care for a loved one, friend or family member

Treatment sessions may be by phone, online, in groups or face-to-face. Treatment options are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) which is a structured therapy where you will set goals you want to reach and work on changes you can make to patterns of thoughts and behaviours to help you attain your goal.

How to make contact

You can self-refer to Health in Mind without seeing your GP by going to the following websites based on where you are registered with your GP

If you are registered with a GP in Mid Essex
[Referral | HPFT IAPT Services \(hpft-iapt.nhs.uk\)](https://www.hpft-iapt.nhs.uk)

If you are registered with a GP in Thurrock

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<https://inclusionthurrock.org/>

If you are registered with a GP in Basildon and Brentwood

<https://www.vitahealthgroup.co.uk/nhs-services/nhs-mental-health/basildon-and-brentwood/>

If you are registered with a GP in Southend and Castle Point and Rochford

<https://www.therapyforyou.co.uk>

Alternatively, you can

- Pick up a self-referral form from your GP surgery
- Contact the Essex Wellbeing Service who will direct you to the correct service by calling 0300 303 998 or go on the website <https://www.essexwellbeingsservice.co.uk/>
- Ask your GP to make a direct referral.

Parents and Families

The Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) provides advice and support to children, young people and families who are in need of support with their emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulties.

The service covers Southend, Essex and Thurrock and is open to young people between the ages of 0-18, or up to 25 for those with special educational needs.

Any child or young person experiencing mental health difficulties as well as any parent, guardian or professional can access the service for help and guidance.

There are lots of ways to access the service.

- A child or young person can contact us directly
- Any parent/guardian or professional such as a teacher, school nurse or GP can contact us on the behalf of the young person

When the service can help?

Everyone goes through ups and downs, but sometimes feelings or behaviours can start to get in the way of day-to-day living. When this happens, it might be time to seek some help.

The phone number for the Emotional Wellbeing Mental Health Service (EWMHS) for children and young people in Essex, provided by North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT) is: **0800 953 0222**

This is a Freephone number. If you call out of hours, please use the new 0800 number which will divert you to our main switchboard.

The service is available to children and young people, and their families or carers, across Essex to access mental health and emotional wellbeing care and support.

Further details can be found on the website

[EWMHS for Southend, Essex \(Colchester\) and Thurrock | NELFT NHS Foundation Trust](#)

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We have brought together a range of useful national helplines, chat rooms that you can talk to, free and in confidence. You can also call NHS 111 and select option 2.

[Young Minds](#) has a helpline for parents. Tel: 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am-4pm). Also young people can reach for support directly. 24/7 text support, free from most mobile phone providers, for young people experiencing a mental health crisis: text YM to 85258

[Family Lives](#) has a helpline for all aspects related to parenting including mental health advice. Tel: 0808 800 2222 (Monday to Friday, 9am-9pm and Saturday to Sunday 10am-3pm)

[Barnardos Family Centres](#) can also provide advice and guidance between 08.45am-4.30pm.

Useful information related to Plastic Surgery

For information about Plastic services at Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust, please visit:

<https://www.mse.nhs.uk/plastic-surgery-and-burns>

My Planned Care Enquiries - Contact Us

If you have a query about your hospital appointment or referral, please call the

Referral Support Service on: 0300 123 0771(local call rate). Lines open Monday - Friday 8am- 6pm

Patient advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If there is a problem, the best way to get it resolved is usually to tell someone there and then.

- On a ward, talk to the sister or charge nurse on duty.
- In a clinic/department, talk to the receptionist or a member of staff.

If you want to talk to a senior manager or to someone who has not been directly involved in your care and treatment, we can usually arrange this straight away during office hours. You can also ask to speak to a member of the PALS department.

If you need to contact the PALS services at our MSE hospitals, the contact details are below

[PALS \(Patient Advice and Liaison Service\) at MSE | Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust](#)
