



# Neurology – Keeping Well





## Introduction

Neurology is a medical specialty that deals with disorders of the nervous system. This can include problems with the brain, the spinal cord, the nerves that supply the limbs and muscles. A neurologist will therefore listen to a person's symptoms to determine whether it could reflect a problem with the nervous system, and might then proceed to perform a physical examination or arrange further tests as appropriate to make a diagnosis. Once a diagnosis has been made, the neurologist will discuss options for management.

## Support while you wait

The NHS has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our staff have worked tirelessly through the pandemic to meet unprecedented levels of demand, and unfortunately this has impacted our ability to deliver planned care. Though we must continue to prioritise the most critically unwell patients, we are doing everything we can to address the backlog of appointments with extra clinics when possible.

We know that you may have experienced a long wait for your hospital appointment or treatment and understand how distressing this must be. We would like to apologise for this and assure you we are working hard to reach you as quickly as we can. We are exploring all possible options for increasing activity safely to bring wait times down.

To support you while you wait and to let you know that we are still here for you, we have provided this information and advice. It is designed to help you manage your condition and your overall health, so you arrive for your appointment in the best possible physical and mental health.

For more information about neurology and associated conditions you can visit these websites:

- <https://migrainetrust.org/>
- <https://headache.org.uk/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/>

## At your appointment

You will be asked some questions at your appointment - here are some examples to think about. If your appointment is to discuss the possibility of treatment, the healthcare professional you are seeing will talk to you about:

- How your condition is affecting your life and what matters to you.
- What any tests, examinations or investigations about your condition have found.
- The possible benefits of treatments might be for you.
- What risks there might be for you for having treatment.
- What alternatives to treatment there might be for you.



- What would be likely to happen if you don't have any treatment.
- It is OK to ask questions. Your healthcare professional wants you to have all the information you need to help you to decide what the best plan and right treatment is for you. They will also take the time to make sure that you have understood all the information they have given you.
- It is your right to be involved as much or as little as you would like to be in decisions about your health and what treatment is right for you.
- You do not need to decide at your appointment. If you need more time to think about your options or to discuss these with family and friends, it is ok to ask for this.

## Cancelling your appointment

We understand that some patients may choose to have their appointment and treatment elsewhere. We advocate patient choice on where you access treatment though please do let us know if you no longer require an appointment with us. It is important that you notify us at the soonest possible opportunity so we can remove you from the waiting list. This can be done via telephone or online.

## Take your medication

Please continue to take any medication as advised and prescribed by your GP or other healthcare professionals until you are informed to make any changes that may be required for treatment.

**It is important to bring a list of the medications you are taking to all appointments.**

If you have any queries please contact your GP.

## Keep moving

Adults should try to be active every day and aim to do at least 150 minutes of physical activity over a week through a variety of activities. Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, gardening, or playing with your children are all good ways to keep active. Activities that improve your strength and balance will also be useful to you.

If you would like to get active but don't know where to start, an exercise referral service can help. For more information visit the NHS [Better Health](#) website.

## Improve your health

### Smoking

Stopping smoking is hard but is one of the best things you will ever do for your health. There are many ways in which to quit cigarette smoking including a [free NHS quit smoking app](#). Your local stop smoking service can also support you in quitting.



## Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. In addition, it can help to:

- lower your blood pressure
- improve your blood sugar level
- reduce pain in your joints
- allow you to exercise more easily.

Losing weight is not about getting it right, it's about getting started. Making small simple changes can really help you shed the pounds. You can download a [free NHS weightloss planning app](#) to help you start healthier eating habits, be more active and start losing weight.

## Alcohol

Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal.

## Diabetes

Good control of your blood sugar is really important to reduce your risk of infections after surgery. Think about your diet and weight. Ensure you take any prescribed medication as directed by your GP or Diabetes Nurse and attend your routine monitoring appointments.

## Blood pressure

Blood pressure should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke. Have your blood pressure checked at your surgery well ahead of your operation – some GP surgeries have automated machines so you can pop in any time. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation. Some local pharmacies also provide blood pressure checks.

## Heart, lung, and other medical problems

If you have any other long-term medical problems, consider asking your GP, practice nurse or pharmacist for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be. You can also book in for a general health check at your GP surgery if you are between 40 and 74 years old.

## COVID-19 vaccination

If you are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccination, it is recommended that you have this prior to attending hospital appointments or surgery. To find out if you are eligible, [visit the NHS COVID-19 vaccination pages](#). If you are eligible and would [like to book your vaccination appointment, visit the national booking service](#).

## Healthy living

We all have parts of our lives that we would like to change, from stopping smoking to achieving and maintaining a healthier weight. The good news is that, as well as improving your health in the long term, making those changes ahead of your treatment can reduce



your risk of a range of complications and can also help you recover more quickly from any surgery.

## Managing pain

You may be in pain or discomfort while you are waiting for an appointment or treatment. We know that some people will be in pain while they are waiting for an appointment or treatment. Pain can have a huge impact on our lives; from how we move, to our mood and sleep.

Frustratingly, pain can affect what matters most to us in life; from our relationships with family and friends, to our ability to work or take part in hobbies. Everyone's pain experience is different, and everyone has different goals they would like to work towards. Having better knowledge around your condition can help you increase your confidence when making decisions around what to change and how to take control back of your life.

## Money worries

Having an acute or chronic condition could affect how many hours you are able to work, and how much you are earning. If you are struggling to pay bills, need help with a benefits issue, or are concerned about growing debt, there is free, confidential support and advice available.

- Benefit Calculator - Turn2Us (<https://benefits-calculator.turn2us.org.uk>)
- Free Debt Advice - Step change ([https://www.stepchange.org/?channel=ppc&gclid=Cj0KCQiA5OuNBhCRARIsACgaiqWqryplLKfryDhpGNnl\\_SVXX2po9jQKyIEb\\_rgGoa8ivlqMqiAdHBQaAomdEALw\\_wcB](https://www.stepchange.org/?channel=ppc&gclid=Cj0KCQiA5OuNBhCRARIsACgaiqWqryplLKfryDhpGNnl_SVXX2po9jQKyIEb_rgGoa8ivlqMqiAdHBQaAomdEALw_wcB))
- NHS - Low income Scheme (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-low-income-scheme>)
- Access to Work - Employment support programme that aims to help more disabled people start or stay in work (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/access-to-work-factsheet/access-to-work-factsheet-for-customers>)

Your local Citizens Advice can help you find a way forward, whatever the problem. They offer confidential information and advice to assist people with legal, debt, consumer, housing, and other problems. Contact your local Citizens Advice (<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/>) office for more information and access to online support.

## Carers can need help too - support is available

We know that there are many people who are caring for family and friends while they are waiting for a hospital appointment or treatment. This might include help with washing, dressing, shopping, and taking medicines and also emotional support, ensuring that the person feels cared for and not alone. Carers UK (<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support>) are a national charity that offers support for carers with employment, practical support, technology and equipment among other things.

## Good mental health



People sometimes feel worried or anxious before a hospital appointment or treatment. This is perfectly normal. Some people might also find that an existing mental health condition gets worse. You can find helpful links for mental health support on the NHS website: [www.nhs.uk/mental-health/](http://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/)

Mental health charity Mind also has webpages about COVID-19 and your wellbeing: [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing)

Talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by fully trained and accredited NHS practitioners. They can help with common mental health problems like stress, anxiety and depression.

**Bedfordshire Wellbeing Service** - [www.elft.nhs.uk](http://www.elft.nhs.uk)

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

If you are concerned that your health is deteriorating you should seek medical advice from your GP who may wish to reassess you. You can also visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) for general information.

For urgent health advice for physical or mental health that is not an emergency, please phone 111. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit the NHS 111 service online at <https://111.nhs.uk/>