

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

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.

The information is updated weekly and anyone can access it including your carer, friends, relatives and the NHS team caring for you.

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.

Vascular Surgery: Varicose Vein Surgery

Introduction

Varicose veins are veins under the skin of the legs which have become widened, bulging and twisted. They are very common and do not cause medical problems in most people. Normally blood flows down the legs through the arteries, and back up the legs through the veins. There are two main systems of veins in the legs – the deep veins which carry most of the blood back up the legs to the heart, and the veins under the skin, which are less important and which can form varicose veins.

All these veins contain valves which should only allow the blood to flow upwards. If the veins become widened and these valves no longer work properly. Blood can then flow backwards down the veins and produce a head of pressure when standing, walking, or sitting. Lying down or “putting your feet up” relieves this head of pressure and usually makes the legs feel better.

Guidance for Patients

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.

The Smokefree Norfolk service provides a range of options to help you quit including podcasts, stop smoking medications and e-cigarettes. The information can be accessed at www.smokefreenorfolk.nhs.uk.

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.

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.

There is also a range of mental health support available locally – please look at the website for more information:

<https://www.wellbeingnands.co.uk/> or phone them on 0300 123 1503.

Other local support services can be found on [the NHS website](#)

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 keeping well on the [Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System \(While you wait - Norfolk and Waveney CCG\)](#) website.

Further information about local services offering support in Norfolk and Waveney is available [here](#).

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. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can also visit www.nhs.uk



Life Threatening Emergencies

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

Contact Us

Norfolk and Waveney Integrated Care System have developed the [While you wait - Norfolk and Waveney CCG](#) to provide you with information about waiting for hospital treatment.