

# Surgery for cancer or suspected cancer - what do I need to know?

If you have received this leaflet, you are currently undergoing, or about to undergo:

- cancer surgery
- surgery for a suspected cancer

You may be feeling worried or anxious, and have concerns about attending the hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help us keep you and others safe when attending hospital, please read this guidance.

**Prior to attending hospital you will need to self-isolate at home along with other members of your household for 14 days before your surgery. Please call the department BEFORE arriving if you, or a member of your household, experience any of the following during that time:**

- a new continuous cough
- or a high temperature (37.8 degrees centigrade or higher)
- or a loss of, or change in, your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia)
- or have been tested positive for COVID-19

Even if you, or a member of your household, have been recently tested negative for COVID-19, you must inform the department if new symptoms occur since testing. If you or a member of your household has serious symptoms and cannot manage at home, they should go to [111.nhs.uk](https://111.nhs.uk) or call 111 if you cannot get online. Information about managing symptoms and self-isolation: [nhs.uk/coronavirus](https://nhs.uk/coronavirus)

## What should I expect?

We are doing everything we can to maintain surgery, but your assessment and care may be disrupted, delayed or performed differently, and results may take longer than expected. Please be patient. Urgent treatment will still go ahead.

When you attend hospital you will notice that it is less busy than usual. This is because many outpatient appointments are being done by telephone or video-calling.

The staff caring for you will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). Please be reassured that the PPE used will be appropriate for your procedure.

Social distancing will be maintained as much as possible, and we ask for your co-operation, but for some treatments and procedures staff may not always be able to maintain social distance.

No visitors will be allowed. We will ensure your families are updated on the progress of your surgery, and video calling may be available.

Appointments and procedures may take place in different locations or hospitals than usual. If this will be difficult, please call in advance of your appointment and ask for help.



## What are the risks?

Surgery is essential part of cancer treatment but any type of operation involves some degree of risk. Our priority is always to ensure that we operate on patients in the safest possible way to minimise risk and maximise benefits.

Currently your healthcare team are considering the additional risk if you were to catch COVID-19 just before your operation, during your hospital stay or when you are recovering after surgery.

If you are infected with COVID-19 just before your operation or in the immediate post-operative period you are likely to become more unwell than usual. This could mean you spend longer in hospital, and may suffer complications or you could die. Other factors that increase you being very unwell with COVID-19 include being over 70, smoking and having other health conditions.

Your surgical team will share the most up to date information that they have with you so that you can make an informed decision.

Choosing to delay or cancel your cancer operation may increase risk of cancer progressing, and future dates for operations may take longer to arrange. If you decide to delay treatment your consultant will discuss alternative care options, if appropriate.

### What we will do

- We will do everything we can to keep you safe, and to provide you with information at all stages.
- We will listen to your concerns and discuss them with you. You will be required to undergo COVID-19 testing prior to attending for surgery.
- If you do develop symptoms after being tested for COVID-19, contact us immediately.
- We recommend you self-isolate at home prior to treatment, test or surgery. You will be advised how long to isolate for - likely to be a period of 14 days.
- Self-isolating means staying at home at all times, having minimal contact with other people, sleeping in a separate room if possible, and observing strict hand hygiene. Family or friends should collect essential items of shopping or medication for you.
- If you develop symptoms after you have had your operation you will be advised on what to do by the clinicians responsible for your care.
- Questions or concerns can be addressed by your clinical nurse specialist, or the Macmillan cancer information and support service at your local Trust.

### Macmillan information and support services:

Blackpool Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	01253 955710
East Lancashire Hospitals NHS Trust	01254 732598
University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust	01524 519578
Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust	01772 523709

### Other helpful information is available on the following websites:

- [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)
- [cancerresearchuk.org](https://www.cancerresearchuk.org)

### Your hospital website has the latest visitor and patient information:

- [bfwh.nhs.uk](https://bfwh.nhs.uk)
- [elht.nhs.uk](https://elht.nhs.uk)
- [uhmb.nhs.uk](https://uhmb.nhs.uk)
- [lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](https://lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

