

Consenting For Your Operation And COVID 19

You and your consultant have agreed that you need an operation. This leaflet is designed to help inform you about having an operation during the COVID 19 pandemic.

COVID 19

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and, rarely, other organs. It is caused by a virus called coronavirus.

Typical symptoms of COVID-19 include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Most people will experience mild symptoms with some even unaware that they have COVID-19. However, some people may become very unwell and may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties, kidney failure and even death. Generally speaking, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer or chronic lung disease.

Risks

Your consultant will have discussed the risks and benefits of the operation with you, but it is important to understand that there are specific risks during the coronavirus pandemic that you must also think about. Overall, the risk of you contracting COVID-19 by coming into a clean theatre environment is very small, but cannot be eliminated completely.

Coming into hospital will require you to come into contact with members of staff who could unknowingly be carrying coronavirus. Equally you could be infected, but not showing symptoms.

Given the nature of the virus, there is an inherent risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 by virtue of proceeding with your operation. Furthermore, we are learning about COVID 19 all the time, so there may be some risks that we are not yet aware of that may also affect your outcome from surgery.

What are we doing to minimise risks – preventative measures

We have worked hard to make sure that our hospitals have minimised the risk of COVID 19 spreading – some of the measures are described below: -

- Reduced people in our hospital - our wards are restricting the numbers of visitors to help prevent the spread to vulnerable patients
- Our staff are provided with PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) which helps prevent the infection moving from person to person
- Our staff have access to rapid swabbing if they have symptoms themselves
- All of our patients admitted as emergencies are swabbed and we have created safe environments for patients admitted with COVID
- We have introduced social distancing in areas where we can
- All our practice follows the current national guidance

Individual decision

We recognise that, knowing these additional risks, you may not want to proceed with your operation at this time. If you decide to delay your treatment, your consultant will inform you of the risks of not proceeding and any alternative treatments that they may be able to offer you.

If you do decide not to proceed at this time, but still want your operation at a later date, we will respect this, and keep you on our records.

If you do decide to continue with your operation, we would like you to take additional precautions. We will ask you to have a swab done that checks if you are carrying the Coronavirus and ask if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in contact with anyone else who has them. We will also ask you and your household to isolate for a period of days in order to reduce your risk of contracting COVID 19 before your operation.

If you do have symptoms, have been in contact with someone else that does, or your test comes back positive, we will delay your treatment if the risks of proceeding outweigh the benefit of having your operation. Your consultant will explain this to you.