

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Your Procedure

Information for patients for swabbing protocol prior to procedures

Key information for patients

You have been given this leaflet because you are booked to come into hospital for a planned procedure or investigation. This leaflet aims to make you aware of the swabbing requirements prior to admission.

Please be aware that:

You may be carrying COVID-19 or have an infection with no symptoms. It is important to know if you are carrying the virus as this may put you at increased risk when you come into hospital. If you undergo surgery whilst carrying COVID-19 or contract COVID-19 whilst in hospital, you may be at increased risk of serious illness and, in some cases, death. If you have had COVID-19 you should not undergo planned major surgery for at least 7 weeks after you have recovered unless there are exceptional circumstances. Your surgeon will discuss this with you.

We would also recommend that if possible you are vaccinated prior to surgery. You should not have planned surgery within two weeks of your first vaccination.

We will do everything we can to perform your operation, keep you safe, and provide you with relevant information at all stages. We will listen to your concerns and discuss them with you.

Before your operation:

- If you are having major surgery or are clinically vulnerable, your surgeon will discuss with you the need for both strict social distancing and hand washing for 7 days before your operation and to minimise your contact with other people outside your household for 3 days. The decision will be made with you and will be based on your individual risk if you were to acquire COVID-19 and factors such as how major your surgery is, the type of anaesthesia proposed (whether local or general) and the prevalence of COVID-19 in the local community. Your individual wishes as to whether to self-isolate or obey strict social distancing are paramount in this process.
- There is a requirement for you to be tested for COVID-19 prior to your procedure.
- Your operation will have to be postponed if you test positive for COVID-19 or if you are unwell.
- You should not take public transport to and from hospital for your operation or COVID-19 swab, but if this is unavoidable you should wear a mask whilst on public transport.
- If travelling in a private car with someone you don't usually live with it is recommended that both the driver and the passenger wear facemasks.
- You will only be allowed to bring a carer to the admissions lounge on the day of your surgery if this has been pre-arranged with your speciality's booking team and your carer has recorded a negative LFT in the morning of your admission. If your carer has not been arranged to attend with you then they will not be allowed in to the Admissions Lounge. This is to assist in the safety of all of our Elective patients.

Information on swabbing

Your clinical team will decide whether your COVID-19 swab should be taken as a PCR or Lateral Flow Device test. This will depend on the type of the procedure or investigation you are having and whether or not you are having a general anaesthetic.

If you need a PCR test, an appointment will be made by your speciality's booking team for around 72 hours prior to your admission date for you to come to one of our swabbing sites and have a swab taken by our trained team of swabbing staff. This appointment date, time and location will be communicated to you by telephone and/or letter. You should limit your contact with other people following your swab. Patients are informed before their admission if they test positive and your procedure may be postponed.

Lateral Flow Device testing is available for most of our procedures. These can be obtained using the Government Portal www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests and requesting delivery to your home address.

If you do not have access to the internet or an email address then you can call 119 who can order the test on your behalf.

Check if you are eligible to order rapid lateral flow tests

In England, you can order tests if:

- you have [a health condition which means you're eligible for COVID-19 treatments \(opens in new tab\)](#)
- your doctor or healthcare professional has told you to get a test because you're being admitted to hospital
- you've spoken to your GP or healthcare professional recently and they asked you to get a test

You will receive a box of 7 tests and this should arrive within three days of placing your order. We recommend you place your order 10 days before your admission date in order to receive them in good time.

You should take a test daily for three days before your admission including on the morning of admission. Each result should be reported on the Government Portal www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result ensuring you enter your email address and/or mobile details and tick to receive confirmation of your result. You should limit your contact with other people as much as possible.

If you don't have access to the internet to record your results you should contact your speciality's booking team if any of your lateral flow device tests record a positive result. Please make a note of your tests serial number and date taken to show on arrival at the hospital if they have all been negative.

If your tests are negative then on the day of your admission you should attend as arranged and bring proof of your results via text or email from the Government Portal. If you are unable to prove your result your procedure might be cancelled or you might be required to take another lateral flow device test at the hospital before your procedure depending on availability.

If you test positive you must contact your speciality booking team to rearrange your procedure. Your procedure will not go ahead if you test positive for COVID-19.

If you have any queries you can contact the Covid Testing Team on 01622 939534.

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone: ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

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