



Risk of Routine Surgery
**During the COVID-19
Pandemic**



Ramsay
Health Care

COVID-19 Pandemic

On 11 March 2020 the World Health Organization confirmed COVID-19 (coronavirus) has now spread all over the world (this means it is a ‘pandemic’). Whilst it is important that people are being encouraged to have surgery when it is needed, it is also essential that everyone is aware of the risks. If you do catch COVID-19 just before or after your surgery, there is an increased risk that you will experience complications.

Your doctor may recommend delaying an operation until COVID-19 is better controlled to increase your chance of a full recovery.

Please visit the World Health Organization website: <https://www.who.int/> for up-to-date information.

Recent research has shown that the complications that patients may experience if they contract COVID-19 just before or after surgery, may be severe and can include death.

The risk may be higher in older patients, those with pre-existing health conditions and those in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME). Ramsay is closely monitoring this situation and has put in place infection control preventative measures aimed to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and specific practices that will help reduce the likelihood of you contracting the virus before your procedure. However, given the nature of the virus and its current circulation in the general population of the UK, there is a risk of becoming infected with COVID-19, which could increase the risks of having your procedure.

It is vitally important that you are fully informed when making decisions about your treatment, therefore, your consultant will discuss the relevant risks and benefits of your treatment with you. At this stage you can decide whether you wish to postpone your treatment or to proceed with your planned care.

If you decide with your doctor that you want to proceed with the operation at this time, then there are some things that we can do to reduce the risk of you having COVID-19 around the time of your surgery (this includes steroid injections).

Your **initial consultation**

Your safety is our number one priority. In order to ensure we take all precautions to minimise any risks to you and our team, some of our processes have changed.

Most of your consultations will be conducted via telephone or video call. We will also share information by email or by letter and may ask you to email or post vital medical and registration documents to us. Following your Consultant consultation, your consent form may be sent to you in the post, together with important information about your procedure to help you make an informed decision.

During this appointment, your Consultant will discuss the choices you need to make. This will be according to the clinical risk and will take into account factors such as the local level of COVID-19 infections and restrictions in your area and your social circumstances.

You may be offered one of the following two approaches, dependent on that risk. If you are not able to accept the approach discussed, then you may need to have your treatment delayed or be treated elsewhere.

1. Socially distancing, wearing face coverings and practicing hand hygiene for 14 days prior to your admission. (If you are able to strictly self isolate for any part of this period, this would be to your benefit). You will also need a COVID-19 swab 2/3 days before your surgery after which you will then need to strictly self isolate until your admission.
2. Strictly self isolating for 14 days prior to your admission. You will also need a COVID-19 swab 2/3 days before your surgery after which you will continue to strictly self isolate until your admission.

Note: In some circumstances, there may not be a requirement for you to undergo a pre surgery swab before your procedure. If this is the case, you will be informed and we would ask you to disregard any references to a pre surgery swab in this booklet.

If you have had a general anaesthetic, it is also advisable for 7 days after your procedure, to isolate and/or follow social distancing and hand hygiene procedures.

Pre-operative assessment / investigations

You will have a face-to-face or remote (telephone or video) pre-operative assessment 14 days before your admission for surgery.

If you wish to proceed then you must then go home and follow the agreed procedures as per 1 or 2 above until the day of your surgery. If asked to come into the hospital for your appointment, please wear a face covering. If you do not have one, you will be given a face mask to wear on arrival. This is for your protection.

Precautions everyone should take

There are general principles you should follow to help prevent the spread of airway and chest infections caused by respiratory viruses, including:



Wash your hands more often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser. Do this after you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, and before you eat or handle food



Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands



Wear a face covering when in places where there are large numbers of people and it is not possible to socially distance and do not handle or touch your face covering any more than you have to



Avoid close contact with people who have symptoms



Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin



Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home

If you are self isolating, **the following will apply:**

Isolating involves staying at home as much as possible and avoiding unnecessary contact with anyone outside of your support 'bubble'.

1. Do not leave your house if it means coming into contact with people not already in your support bubble.
2. Do not attend any gatherings. This includes gatherings of friends and families in private spaces, for example, family homes, weddings and religious services. Do not go to public places where there may be large numbers of people e.g. supermarkets and shopping centres.
3. Do not let anyone into your house unless they are already living with you or it is absolutely necessary.
4. Strictly avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough.



Advice for other household members if you are self isolating:

The rest of your household do not need to self isolate themselves, but they should do what they can to support you in isolating and to carefully follow the guidance on social distancing on the government website at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications. Wherever possible they should also minimise their contact with others outside of your support bubble.

At home you should:

1. Minimise the time other people living with you spend in shared spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and sitting areas, and keep shared spaces well ventilated.
2. Try to maintain social distancing from the people you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If you can, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying themselves after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
3. If you share a toilet and bathroom with others, it's important that they are cleaned every time after use (for example, wiping surfaces they have come into contact with). Consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with you using the facilities first.
4. If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while they're present. If you can, take your meals back to your room to eat. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry the family's used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing-up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly. Try to use your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.
5. Everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face, and frequently clean surfaces and items that are touched often.

It's your choice to decide whether to follow the measures we advise.

However, failure to comply with the agreed degree of isolation prior to surgery will put you at increased risk of potential complications if you catch COVID-19 and could lead to your surgery being deferred.

Pre-procedure screening

We may ask you to attend for a COVID-19 test, about 2/3 days before your admission (the location for this will be in your appointment letter). You may also have bloods taken at this time if required. You will be informed if you need either of these tests.

If possible you should drive in your own car alone to this appointment - or only with someone from your household. If this is not possible and you are relying on someone else to drive you, you should sit in the back seat furthest away from the driver and wear your face covering. After your swab has been taken, it is important that you self isolate until your admission. If this test is positive, you will be contacted about your operation, as it may need to be postponed. You will be advised to self isolate again in line with government guidelines (see ref: NHS Stay at Home leaflet).



On the day of your procedure

You should again drive to the hospital in your own car, alone or only with someone from your household. If this is not possible and you are relying on someone else to drive you, you should sit in the back furthest away from the driver and wear your face covering. If you have driven alone, and will not be able to drive home (due to your surgery) or expect to be in hospital for longer than a day, please arrange for someone to collect your car, so it is not left in the car park. Due to the current restrictions, you will be unlikely to receive visitors during your stay with us. You will be able to use your mobile phone to keep in touch with family and friends.

On admission, you will notice that our staff are wearing protective equipment (gloves, aprons and masks). You will be asked about any COVID-19 symptoms and you must truthfully confirm that you have completed your agreed isolation as required. You will have your temperature checked. Any concerns may lead to your planned procedure being postponed.

In some situations, you may not meet your surgeon or anaesthetist until the day of your surgery, and in rare cases they may not be the consultants you expected. Rest assured they will be experienced and trained to perform your procedure.

After your procedure

Once you are ready to be discharged we ask that you arrange to be collected by a member of your household as soon as possible. If this is not possible and you are relying on someone else to drive you, you should sit in the back furthest away from the driver and wear a face covering. If required, we will contact you via telephone and you will only be invited back to the hospital for a follow up appointment if we cannot undertake the checks we need to over the phone or via video link.

Post operative monitoring for COVID-19

Common symptoms of COVID-19:

The most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are recent onset of one of the following:



- A new continuous cough



- A high temperature (above 37.8°C)



- Loss of, or change in, normal sense of taste or smell

If you think post-operatively you have developed symptoms of COVID-19, please seek clinical advice using the NHS 111 online coronavirus service (111.nhs.uk/) or call NHS 111. Do this as soon as you have symptoms and advise them you have recently had surgery. Please also inform our hospital, using the contact number provided to you by our hospital staff.

In an emergency, call 999 if you're seriously ill. Do not visit the GP, pharmacy, urgent care centre or a hospital.

If you need to speak with us regarding any of the information within this leaflet, please don't hesitate to call the hospital.



Steroid injection procedures

Please note that if you are having a steroid injection and you have any identified risks, you will be given the opportunity of having a ‘cooling off’ period of at least 24 hours after your initial consultation, in order to give you time to consider your options. You should not feel under pressure to make a decision. We advise you to attend for a COVID-19 test, 2/3 days before your admission. If you choose to have a test you should self isolate until your procedure.

You are also recommended to self isolate for 7 days after your procedure due to the affects on your immune system and increased risk of catching an infection.

References

- Disparities in the Risks and Outcomes of COVID-19: Public Health England June 2020
- NHS Guidance on Shielding Leaflet available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19> (accessed 16th July 2020)
- NHS Guidance Stay at Home Leaflet available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance> (accessed 16th July 2020)
- NICE, COVID-19 rapid guideline: arranging planned care in hospitals and diagnostic services (27th July 2020)
- British Orthopaedic Association, Management of patients with musculoskeletal and rheumatic conditions (June 2020)

Personal Tracker

This tracker will help you monitor the days you have successfully socially distanced or self isolated (which ever you have agreed to do).

Please tick each day as required - or write in the box where you went if you were not able to comply (e.g. attended for COVID-19 swab).

Date tracker commenced				_ / _ / _	
Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	
Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14		



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