# Information for patients undergoing surgery during the COVID-19 pandemic

Thank you for taking the time to read through this leaflet, which includes some information on the risks associated with undergoing surgery during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is natural to feel anxious before hospital treatment, but knowing what to expect can help.

## Consent

Your surgeon will have discussed the risks of your proposed operation with you and any alternatives that may be available. This leaflet includes some information on the additional risks caused by COVID-19. It should be read together with the other patient information leaflets you have been given so you know about the possible side-effects and complications of this operation before you give your consent.

## Additional risks relating to COVID-19

So far outcomes for patients after surgery with confirmed COVID-19 infection have not yet been fully investigated and the effects of COVID-19 on patients undergoing surgery are not fully known. However, there are a small number of reports that suggest undergoing surgery whilst infected with COVID-19 increases the risk of serious complications or death in the days following surgery. It does appear that having emergency surgery, major surgery or surgery for cancer increases these risks. Additionally, people over 70 years of age or from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, men and those with other health conditions such as diabetes, obesity and hypertension appear to be at higher risk of developing complications from COVID-19. As with all surgical treatment, the chances of complications also depend on the exact type of operation you are having and other factors such as your general health. The specific risks for you if you were to develop a COVID-19 infection around the time of your surgery will be discussed with you by your surgeon.

## Steps we are taking to minimise the risk

We have taken a number of precautionary steps to minimise the risks to you by trying to ensure you do not have COVID-19 on admission and these include:

– Asking you to self-isolate before your operation

– Asking you if you have self-isolated before, in line with Government guidance, due to symptoms that could be signs of COVID-19 such as a persistent cough, high temperature or a loss or changed sense of normal smell or taste (anosmia)

– Testing you with a swab test for COVID-19 3 days before your operation

– We will ask you to follow the government guidance on social distancing and robust hand hygiene 14 days prior to your admission to hospital

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- Asking you to let us know if you or anyone in your household experiences any COVID-19 symptoms at any time during your self-isolation

- Checking whether you have any symptoms of COVID-19 when you arrive at the hospital

- Giving you guidance on how to socially distance when you attend our hospital for your treatment

Other than in an emergency, your surgery is likely to be postponed if it's not possible to complete these checks or if you are infected with COVID-19 (including when an infection is suspected).

Despite these thorough checks, there is a small chance that you could be developing a COVID-19 infection at the time you have your operation even though you may be displaying no symptoms. Whilst the members of the team caring for you will be following strict infection control procedures and will wear appropriate personal protective equipment during your treatment, it is still possible that they or someone else with an unknown infection could pass it on to you.

If you have any questions or concerns about your surgical treatment please raise them with your surgeon or nurse.

## Further information

More information for patients about having an operation during the COVID-19 pandemic is available from:

- Centre for Peroperative Care (https://cpoc.org.uk/patients)

- Royal College of Surgeons of England (https://www.rcseng.ac.uk/coronavirus/recovery-of-surgical-services/tool-3/)

- NIHR Global Health Research Unit (http://nihrglobalsurgery.org/surgeryduringcovid)

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