




Spire

Harpenden Hospital

Breast Care

at Spire Harpenden Hospital

Looking after you

A photograph showing a close-up of a nurse with blonde hair smiling and placing her hand on the shoulder of an elderly woman with short grey hair. The woman is wearing a white hospital gown with a blue pattern. The background is blurred, showing a hospital setting.

“I can’t praise all
the nurses enough;
they always welcome
you with a smile
and spend as much
time with you as
you need.”

We're with you all the way

When can I come to Spire Harpenden?

If you notice a change in your breast you should visit your GP who will be able to refer you to one of our specialist Breast Consultants.

If you have already been given a diagnosis and you wish to be seen privately or pay for your own treatment your existing hospital can refer you to our specialist services for treatment.

If you have had a breast screening mammogram and require further investigations these can be carried out at our facility.

If you have a family history and would like to start screening early we offer this service to patients over 35. If you are over 73 and not receiving screening investigations from the NHS you can self-refer and any reports will be sent to your GP.

One stop breast clinic

Spire Harpenden Hospital offers a rapid access breast clinic for women with concerns or a family history of breast problems.

To make our appointments as convenient to you as possible we have clinics Monday to Saturday, and you can be seen within 24 hours of enquiring. Your appointment will be with an experienced Consultant Breast Surgeon. Your Consultant will begin by discussing your concerns, taking a full medical history as well as examining you. Following on from this a decision can be made on which investigations should be undertaken to suit your individual needs.

The team will carry out the investigations needed at your first appointment using state of the art equipment that can help detect breast abnormalities. This can include digital mammography, clinical breast examination, MRI and ultrasound. The results of your mammogram and ultrasound will be explained to you by your consultant on the same day. This ensures that you get the information quickly and without any undue wait.

Diagnostic tests and investigations

In addition to our Consultant Breast Surgeons and breast care nurses, we have highly trained, dedicated Consultant breast radiologists and pathologists.

Digital mammography (4 views)

A mammogram is an X-ray examination that shows the internal structures of the breasts. Digital mammography differs from traditional mammography by converting the X-ray output into a digital image. The images are produced quickly and assessed by the radiographer instantly. The digital machine is quick, so you spend very little time in uncomfortable positions. Using digital mammography our specialist is able to expand the image of the breast fully to detect even the smallest of problem areas.

Ultrasound

This is a painless test which uses sound waves to build up a picture of the breast. For an ultrasound scan you will be asked to lie on a table, usually facing upwards. A clear gel will be applied to the breast, which helps the machine to make secure contact with the body. The radiologist will move the handheld scanner around to see the problem areas.

Fine needle aspiration (FNA)

Sometimes if you have a lump, your Consultant may want to take a sample of cells for analysis. A fine needle aspiration is a relatively quick and simple procedure carried out in our Out-Patient clinic. Using a fine needle and syringe, your surgeon or radiologist will take a sample of cells from the lump to see if any problem cells are present.

Sometimes, especially if the lump is small, a FNA may be carried out in the X-ray department so that the doctor can use X-ray or ultrasound guidance to ensure that the needle takes cells from the abnormal area of the breast.

Core biopsy

Core biopsy is a commonly performed procedure that uses a needle to take a piece of tissue from the lump or abnormal area when larger samples of tissue are needed. Core biopsies are often undertaken using ultrasound to guide the doctor to the lump. Local anaesthetic is injected into the area first to numb it. You may feel a little soreness or a sensation of pressure, but this should last only for a short time.

A number of biopsies are usually taken at the same time. These samples are then sent to the laboratory to be looked at by a pathologist under a microscope. Depending on the number of biopsies taken, the breast tissue may be quite bruised and sore afterwards and this may take a few weeks to completely disappear.

MRI

Occasionally, depending on the results of the mammogram and ultrasound images, your Consultant may decide that an MRI scan of your breasts is necessary to provide further information. MRI is a painless, non-invasive diagnostic imaging procedure which uses a strong magnetic field to create a detailed image of your breast.

You will be asked to lie down on your tummy and your breasts will be placed into the correct position by a female radiographer or nurse. Usually a small injection of a contrast medium called gadolinium is injected through a vein in your arm to help highlight certain structures within the breast tissue.

If you need to have an MRI scan, our specialist MRI staff will explain the procedure carefully and ensure that you are comfortable through the procedure.



A Heartwood Ward bedroom

Cancer treatment and care

Following your investigations, your Consultant will discuss the results with you.

For those who have received a cancer diagnosis, our highly experience team of surgeons and specialist support staff will work together to deliver excellent care. They aim to ensure that you are looked after from the moment of your diagnosis, throughout your treatment and aftercare. It is important to us that you feel safe, confident and reassured every step of the way.

To make the process as straightforward as possible for you, we offer flexible appointment times and calm, clean surroundings in our new dedicated chemotherapy ward.

Surgery

If you require surgery, your Consultant will explain and discuss the most suitable options for you before carrying out your operation.

If you need a medical pre-assessment you will be booked in before your surgery. You will also have the chance to speak to our dedicated breast care clinical nurse specialist before your operation about any questions you might have. They will be your contact throughout your treatment, providing support throughout your stay. We have a dedicated breast care support worker who assists clinics and can visit you on the ward.

You will be looked after in your own private room, and cared for by our experienced nursing team, who will do everything they can to make your recovery swift and as comfortable as possible. Your visitors can come to see you at any time provided you don't need an undisturbed rest period. Drinks and meals for your visitors can be arranged with our pantry staff at an additional cost.

Breast reconstruction

Spire Harpenden Hospital is able to offer a full and comprehensive range of oncoplastic and reconstructive breast procedures. For some patients we are able to offer immediate reconstruction, which is performed at the same time as your initial surgery. All options will be fully explored with your Consultant to find the best solution for you.



Oncology

You may require radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer.

We carry out chemotherapy at Spire Harpenden, and any radiotherapy will take place at Mount Vernon Cancer Centre or Elstree Cancer Centre depending on which is more convenient for you.

Our chemotherapy suite is run by our specialist chemotherapy nursing team. Patients benefit from a patient centred approach, with individually tailored treatment regimens led by specialist Consultant Oncologists.

Further information

If you would like some more information about our breast care services do ask a member of staff on our Heartwood Ward, who would be happy to answer any questions you have.

You can also access further information here:

Heartwood Ward

01582 714 383

Out-patients department

0800 585 112

Macmillan Cancer

0808 808 0000

www.macmillan.org.uk

Breakthrough Breast Cancer

0909 010 0200

www.breakthrough.org.uk

Breast Cancer Care

0808 800 6000

www.breastcancercare.org.uk





Ongoing care and support

Your health and wellbeing is important to us, not only during your treatment, but afterwards as well. After-care is a high priority for our breast care team here at Spire Harpenden. We understand the emotional and physical aspects of your recovery and we are able to offer advice and support during this time. Our staff are committed to making sure you feel comfortable and are able to ask questions at any time.

Open access policy

We offer a ten year follow up plan as standard to all of our patients who have had cancer treatment. We also ensure that you have access to an extended range of nursing information and support services.

Support group and coffee mornings

We run a breast care support group evening meeting every three months for women who are undergoing or have completed their treatment. This is a great chance to meet others who are going through a similar situation, as well as listening to a talk on a relevant topic.

Looking after you.



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