

Pre-assessment advice on preparing for surgery

Having surgery is a big moment in your life and it's normal to feel anxious about it.

Patients who are fit and able to improve their health and activity levels recover from surgery more quickly.

What you do now can have a really big impact on your recovery.

Taking an active role in planning and preparing for your operation will help you feel in control, leave hospital sooner and get back to normal more quickly.

There are many changes you can make to reduce the risks of surgery. Small changes, even over a short time, can make a big difference.

Exercise

Your heart and lungs work harder after an operation to help the body to heal. If you are already active, they will be used to this. While you are waiting for your operation, try and increase your activity levels.

Brisk walking, swimming, cycling, gardening or playing with your children or grandchildren are all helpful. Swimming can be helpful for those with obesity or joint pain. Try to do any activity which makes you feel out of breath at least three times per week. Start slowly and stay within your limits. Take advice if exercise is difficult for you. Stop and ask for medical advice if you develop new problems including chest pain, dizziness or your heartbeat becomes irregular. Activities that improve your strength and balance will also be useful for your recovery, for example daily 'sit-to-stand' exercises.

Weight

If you are overweight, losing weight can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. Losing weight can also help you to:

- lower your blood pressure
- improve your blood sugar level
- reduce pain in your joints
- reduce your risk of blood clots after surgery
- reduce your risk of wound infections after surgery
- allow you to exercise more easily
- reduce the risks associated with having an anaesthetic.

[One You East Sussex](https://oneyoueastsussex.org.uk) signpost to several weight loss programmes that can support you to lose weight: oneyoueastsussex.org.uk

- Gloji is a digital weight loss programme – a 12-week programme that looks beyond just the number on the scales. The programme simplifies weight loss through tailored support and education across nutrition, movement, sleep, alcohol and mind.
- Man v Fat is a new approach to men's weight loss, where losers win. Man v Fat makes weight loss competitive by putting you into teams.

- The One You East Sussex 12-week group programme aims to help clients lose at least 5% of their body weight. The weekly sessions combine education and exercise to help you achieve sustainable weight loss.

Healthy diet

Your body needs to repair itself after surgery – eating a healthy diet before and after surgery can really help. This means getting enough protein and '5 a day' or more of fruit and vegetables. A good diet helps wound healing and your immune system.

Anaemia

Anaemia is low blood count. If you have been bleeding or have a chronic medical condition, a blood test can check whether you are anaemic.

If you are anaemic, you should talk to your GP about treatment to improve your blood count before surgery. This may include ensuring you have an iron rich diet, taking iron supplements or in some cases an iron infusion may be recommended.

Treating your anaemia before surgery reduces the chance of your surgery being postponed and reduces the chance of you needing a blood transfusion during or after surgery.

Drug and alcohol support

Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. If you drink regularly, you should make sure you are drinking within the recommended limits or lower. If you drink more than this, you should also aim to cut down before your operation to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery and to avoid withdrawal symptoms during your stay in hospital.

The [East Sussex STAR Drug and Alcohol Service](#) helps people who need support for drug and/or alcohol use: changeorlive.org/star-drug-alcohol-service-east-sussex

The drug service provides tailored help for those who are using drugs such as opiates, cocaine, cannabis, benzodiazepines, ketamine, MDMA, steroids and amphetamine in the shape of one-to-one or group work, substitute prescribing, detox and rehab programmes.

The alcohol team helps people who need support for their alcohol use, focusing on your needs, via one-to-one or group work, substitute prescribing, detox and rehab programmes.

Smoking

Stopping smoking is hard, but quitting or cutting down shortly before surgery can reduce your length of stay in hospital and improve wound healing and lung function. Preparing for surgery offers a real opportunity to commit to stopping smoking.

[One You East Sussex](#) stop smoking advisors can support you throughout your quit attempt. They will see you (up to a maximum of 12 appointments) to help you remain smoke free. You are four times more likely to quit for good with support: oneyoueastsussex.org.uk

Diabetes

Good control of your blood sugar is really important to reduce your risk of infections after surgery. For surgery, our guidance is for the HbA1c level to be 69 or below.

Once your surgery has been agreed, you will be referred to the hospital diabetic service to ensure you are optimised for surgery.

Blood pressure

Blood pressure should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke. Sometimes operations may be delayed if it is too high.

Our cut off blood pressure is 170/100 but ideally you should have a blood pressure much lower than this.

Have your blood pressure checked at your surgery well ahead of your operation – some GP surgeries have automated machines so you can pop in any time. If you have a machine at home you can check your blood pressure yourself. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation.

Anxiety and mental health

Most people feel some anxiety about having surgery. If the thought of going into hospital is making you very anxious or upset, please highlight this to the pre-assessment nurse.

There are many techniques including mindfulness, relaxation, breathing exercises or yoga that could help you relax before and after your surgery.

On the day of your operation

It's also important to think about how to relax and stay calm on the day of your operation. It is useful to plan ahead and think about what to take with you to the hospital to keep your mind occupied while you are waiting. You might want to read a book or magazine, listen to music through headphones, do a crossword or even mindful colouring in. Perhaps plan in advance a special reward to look forward to when you get home.

[Every mind matters](#) offers further information and support: nhs.uk/every-mind-matters

Sources of information

www.rcoa.ac.uk/fitterbettersooner

Useful telephone numbers:

Hospital switchboard: 0300 31 4500

Surgical pre-assessment clinic Conquest Hospital 0300 131 5013

Firle pre-assessment clinic Eastbourne District General Hospital 0300 131 5394

Important information

This patient information is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4784 or by email at: esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:
Matron Pre Assessment

The Clinical Specialty/Unit that have agreed this patient information leaflet:
Diagnostic, Anaesthetic and Surgery - Pre Assessment

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