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Pre-assessment team: 0
Admissions team: 0

Social Distancing before and after your operation

This is an important information leaflet describing changes to our admission policy. It is important that you read and understand this and comply with the guidance outlined. If you have any questions please contact the pre-assessment team on or email

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and guidance from the NHS¹ and the British Orthopaedic Association² we have introduced precautions to protect you from the risks of Coronavirus infection during and after your operation. There is evidence that if you have Coronavirus infection at the time of or soon after surgery you may have an increased risk of complications and death³. We also want to prevent you from unknowingly bringing the infection into SWLEOC and putting other patients and staff members at risk.

The precautions as recommended by NHS England that we will be taking are

1. Ensuring that you have observed self-isolation (with your household) or shielding (within your household) for fourteen days *before your operation* as well as fourteen days *after your operation* and
2. We will screen you for symptoms and test you for Coronavirus prior to surgery.

Fourteen days self-isolation or shielding

On average it takes 5–6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show, however it can take up to 14 days⁴. It is estimated that 99% of patients with Coronavirus infection will develop symptoms within 14 days of acquiring the infection⁵. For this reason, it is essential that **for 14 days prior to your operation and 14 days after your operation, you should stay at home** to reduce the risk of exposure to Coronavirus that could be circulating in the community. **Do not go to work, school, or public areas, and do not use public transport or taxis.** If you have self-isolated for 14 days and neither you nor anyone in your household have any symptoms, the risk of you being infected with Coronavirus is estimated to be 1 in 100.

There are two options:

(a) Self-isolating along with your entire household²

It is preferable to self-isolate with your household group.

Personal

- During this time, you may continue to interact with the members of your household group, but not invite friends or other family to the house. If you want to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, use the phone or social media.

- If you leave the house please wash your hands as soon as you get home. Continue to wash your hands or use sanitiser regularly throughout the day.
- Please cancel all other regular medical and dental appointments.
- You may take outdoor exercise but must ensure social distancing at all times. This means you must avoid crowded areas and keep a 2-metre (6 feet) distance between you and other people.
- Plan ahead and think about what you will need in order to be able to stay at home for the full 7 or 14 days.

Household

- The whole of your household does not leave the home for 14 days before you come into hospital for your operation.
- If family members need to go out to work, consider alternative accommodation for them during your period of self-isolation. If that is not possible, consider isolating them in their own rooms.
- If any member of the household experiences COVID-19 symptoms during this period, your operation should be cancelled and you should contact the SWLEOC pre-assessment team on

External

- You should stay away from work but working from home is perfectly fine.
- Talk to your employer, friends and family to ask for their help to access the things you will need to make your stay at home a success. Plan in advance the things that you would do during the 14 days such as reading or watching movies.
- Think and plan how you will get food and medicines. Can your friends or family help by dropping them off outside your house? Can you order food online?
- If you require help with buying groceries, other shopping or picking up medication, or walking a dog, you will need to ask friends or relatives. Alternatively, you can order medication by phone or online. You can also order your shopping online. Make sure you tell delivery drivers to leave items outside for collection if you order online. The delivery driver should not come into your home. When you receive deliveries or need to answer the front door, you must observe social distancing rules and wipe down all items as you bring them into the house.

(b) Shielding within your household⁶

With this option, you will 'shield' yourself by distancing from others in your household to reduce the risk of infection. If any member of the household experiences COVID-19 symptoms during this period, there could be a risk that you have become infected within the household even with distancing precautions in place. You will need to discuss this with the SWLEOC pre-assessment team on (

The UK Government has guidance for long-term shielding on their website⁵. Since we are asking you to only shield for a short period of time, you do *not* need to register on the website.

The key points (from the Government guidance⁵) while shielding from others in your home are:

- 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.
- Keep 2 metres (3 steps) away from people you live with and encourage them to sleep in a different bed where possible. If possible, use a separate bathroom from the rest of the household. Use separate towels from the other people in your house, both for drying after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes.
- If you share a toilet and bathroom with others, it's important that they are cleaned every time after use (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). Consider drawing up a rota for bathing, with you using the facilities first.
- 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. If you are using your own utensils, remember to use a separate tea towel for drying these.
- Everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

Based on interpretation of current guidelines² you are *not* entitled to sick pay ahead of your surgery.

Whichever option you choose, we understand that the period of self-isolating or shielding could add anxiety to the normal expected stressful experience in the lead up to your operation.

Screening for symptoms and testing for Coronavirus prior to surgery

You should telephone the SWLEOC pre-assessment team on _____ if you or anyone in your household experience any symptoms of COVID-19 during the 14-day self-isolation/shielding period. These symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness
- Aches and pains
- Sore throat
- Diarrhoea
- Conjunctivitis
- Headache
- Loss of taste or smell
- A rash on the skin or discolouration of the fingers or toes⁴.

Your operation will need to be re-scheduled if you have had these symptoms.

A staff member from SWLEOC will also call you 7 days before your operation to check if you or anyone that you are living with has had any COVID-19 symptoms. If you do not have symptoms, you will be required to have a swab test to confirm that you do not have infection 2-3 days before your operation. We will give you instructions for this. This test will be done at a drive through test facility (you will receive separate instruction regarding this).

You should not take public transport to come to hospital on the day of surgery. You may travel to the hospital in a private car with a member of your household that you have been isolating with. If you do not have private transport, we will provide you with transport. We would encourage you to wear a face mask for your journey until you arrive at the SWLEOC reception. To make sure that you remain

safe, we will also ask you questions regarding symptoms when you arrive at hospital on the day of your surgery. Please do not come to the hospital if you or any of your household have symptoms on the day of your surgery.

After your operation

If you get Coronavirus infection in the period soon after surgery, you could become seriously ill and may need to be readmitted to hospital. To avoid catching the virus after surgery, it is vital that you **self-isolate or shield for 14 days after your surgery** with the same measures as described above.

References

1. NHS Roadmap To Safely Bring Back Routine Operations. Published 14 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2020/05/nhs-roadmap/>.
2. British Orthopaedic Association: Re-starting non-urgent trauma and orthopaedic care: Full guidance. v1, published 12 May 2020. Available, at: <https://www.boa.ac.uk/uploads/assets/9383a53f-36d8-4782-8fe264c691b39b15/BOA-Guidance-for-restart-full-doc-final2-v11.pdf>.
3. Shaoqing Lei *et al.* (2020) Clinical characteristics and outcomes of patients undergoing surgeries during the incubation period of COVID-19 infection. *E Clin Med*, 21 (100331). [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370\(20\)30075-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/eclinm/article/PIIS2589-5370(20)30075-4/fulltext).
4. World Health Organisation: Coronavirus symptoms; Accessed 17 May 2020. Available at: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_3
5. Lauer SA et al (2020) The Incubation Period of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) From Publicly Reported Confirmed Cases: Estimation and Application. *Ann Intern Med*. 2020 May 5;172(9):577-582. doi: 10.7326/M20-0504.
6. Guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from Covid-19. Updated 5 May 2020. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19>.