

Thank you for choosing Phoenix Hospital Group for your operation. In these difficult times, we know that you might have many questions prior to the day of surgery. We hope that these questions will help guide you during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Is it safe to have my surgery done?

By following our policy it is extremely unlikely you would be infected. There is some retrospective research (an audit done after the operation) which shows that an operation may increase the risk of serious Covid 19 symptoms and death but only if you are infected BEFORE the operation.

A separate paper in the Lancet demonstrated more severe illness and risk of death if infected before or after the operation but again didn't screen all patients having an operation. Other patients may have had Covid-19 and an operation but not been ill.

These papers suggest increased risk over 70, and for men over 50. There is an increased risk if you have other diseases, and undergo major surgery or emergency surgery. We are reviewing these factors at pre-assessment and advising higher risk patients accordingly. Importantly, a paper from Birmingham showed cancer patients did not have more severe illness or increased mortality if they contracted the virus.

Your anaesthetist will discuss the possibility of a spinal or epidural anaesthetic as well as sedation if you wish, as this may involve a lower risk, but the risk is low and not all operations are suitable. We also advise staying at home to convalesce after discharge and will provide specific information for each operation.

How do you stop infected patients putting me at risk?

We prevent patients who are infected being admitted. We apply a three criteria step procedure to every patient. First we ask for 10 clear days of isolation where you stay at home together with your household to reduce the risk of being infected. Second we ask every patient to complete a questionnaire. Third we undertake a PCR swab and ensure it is negative before every admission. We also take the temperature of every patient on admission and ask the screening questions again.

How do I complete my questionnaire?

You will find the questionnaire within this email sent. Please complete it as soon as possible. We will then contact you to arrange for the swab test 2-3 days before your admission at a time to suit you.

If I answer YES to one of the questions, what does that mean?

Our pre-assessment nurses will review your answers and contact you. A positive answer may not increase the risk to others. If there is a risk, we will provide further advice to facilitate your operation. We will not merely cancel your treatment.

Can I bring a friend or relative with me to the hospital?

During this time we cannot allow any accompanying adults or children to enter the hospital. Minimising risk means reducing the number of people in the building at any time. If you are going home the same day as your operation we ask for a responsible adult to collect you from the hospital front door. We will provide an estimated discharge time, and you will be able to contact the person collecting you after your operation to confirm the time.

Why do I have to come to the outpatient clinic for a covid-19 PCR swab?

The covid-19 test is a swab from your mouth and nose. It is difficult to swab yourself properly meaning the result could be falsely negative allowing infected patients into the hospital. The swab will be taken by a specially trained member of staff.

Does my insurance company pay for this test or will I have to pay for it?

At the moment, you will have to pay for the test. We are in discussions with insurance companies to see if this test can be reimbursed. If it does, we will reimburse you.

Is the swab test painful?

It is a little uncomfortable, but it only lasts a few seconds and there is no pain afterwards.

What happens if my swab result is positive?

We will contact you with your result. PLEASE DO NOT COME TO THE HOSPITAL WITHOUT THE NEGATIVE RESULT. If your result is positive, you will have to self-isolate at home for a period of 14 days and we will reschedule your operation. We will ask you to come back for another swab test before your admission to ensure every patient we admit is negative.

Can I do the antibodies blood test instead of the PCR swab?

The blood test for antibodies only detects if you have had the virus in the past but does not show whether you have it now. You might still be infectious. We are happy to provide the antibody test as well.

How can I get to the hospital on the day of surgery?

We ask you not to travel by underground or bus. Potential overcrowding not only puts you at risk but also makes it possible that your clothes and bag might become contaminated. Walking, cycling, black cab or car are our preferred methods of transport. If you are concerned that you may have contaminated yourself or your clothes, please inform reception on arrival.

How do I know the hospital staff and my surgeon are not infected?

All our staff and all our consultants undergo even more rigorous screening with their own questionnaire plus PCR swabs or antibody tests. This is repeated regularly. Nobody is allowed into our buildings unless these are up to date and demonstrate no risk.

All our staff and doctors have to abide by our policies on PPE and social distancing. We have put clear screens in our reception areas and will ask you to wear a mask at all times. We will provide you with a mask on arrival. We ask you to prepay any charges to avoid using credit card machines. We limit the number of people in our waiting areas so it is vital you try to arrive on time.

Are your precautions as stringent as the NHS?

We have met and exceeded the measures in place in the NHS. Our policies have been derived by a group including doctors and nurses, based on scientific and epidemiological research. We are happy to provide more information at any time. We are completely open about policies and risk. We welcome and act on comments.

Is it safe to have an operation?

By following our policy it is extremely unlikely you would be infected. There is some retrospective research (an audit done after the operation) which shows that an operation may increase the risk of serious Covid 19 symptoms and death but only if you are infected BEFORE the operation. The risk is increased in the elderly and those with comorbidity. It is likely that a general anaesthetic is necessary. Your anaesthetist will discuss the possibility of a spinal or epidural anaesthetic as well as sedation if you wish, but the risk is low and not all operations are suitable.

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