

Information for parents and carers about children's planned admissions for surgery and investigation under general anaesthesia

The past few months have proven extremely challenging for the NHS and many changes have been required to allow care to be safely delivered, meaning that almost no planned surgery or investigation under general anaesthesia have been carried out over this period. This has resulted in many children waiting for surgery, or tests, which they may need to help them feel better or to prevent their condition getting worse.

Fortunately, lock-down has significantly reduced the number of new cases of COVID. We now feel that it is **safe enough** to increase the number of children who can have planned surgery.

It is important that your child has their operation. However, it is equally **important that you feel it is safe to bring your child to hospital**. For this reason, a number of measures have been put in place to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in hospital.

During your child's hospital stay, all staff will follow infection control measures, including wearing masks. Sometimes they may wear visors, gloves, hoods or surgical gowns. These are to help to protect all visitors and staff.

We recommend preparing your child for the doctors, nurses and other people working in the hospital wearing masks so that they are not surprised when they attend.

Before your child's hospital visit

All children undergoing planned surgery will be screened for COVID-19 in two ways:

- 1. Pre-assessment** – a few days before admission **and** on the day of admission: you will be asked questions about symptoms of COVID-19, or any other significant illness, in your child and all household members. If a child or a member of their household has symptoms of COVID-19, or other significant illnesses, in the days leading up to their operation, their operation may be postponed.
- 2. COVID-19 swab** - all children undergoing planned surgery will have a nose and throat swab to look for COVID-19 at least once in the few days leading up to their operation. If they are found to be positive, their operation may be postponed, depending on how urgently it is needed. In some circumstances if the first swab is negative, a second swab may be taken closer to the time of the procedure.

Pre-operative isolation – children and families will not routinely be asked to isolate before their operation, unless told otherwise by the hospital.

Parents/carers are more likely than their child to be infected with COVID-19. For this reason, strict measures have been put in place to reduce the spread of infection between adults. When your child is in hospital, parents/carers will be expected to:

- Wear a face covering when away from your child's bedside
- Observing social distancing
- Undertake regular hand washing, including when entering and leaving wards.

Your child will not be expected to wear a face covering but they are welcome to do so if they wish.

Information for resident carers (parents or carers staying with children during their stay in hospital):

Day-case procedures (when your child is in and out of hospital in one day):

One resident carer will be able to accompany their child into hospital for their operation.

Inpatient procedures (when your child needs to stay in hospital after your operation):

Local hospital policy should be followed. Only one resident carer will be able to accompany their child into hospital for their operation. Some hospitals will allow you to alternate with another carer from the same household. If parents/carers are from two different households, then only one will be allowed to stay with the child unless the admission is prolonged. Only in exceptional circumstances will two resident carers be allowed at the same time.

You will be able to accompany your child to the operating theatre and will be able to stay with them until they have gone to sleep for their operation.

Strict measures have been put in place to minimise the number of people using shared ward facilities at the same time (such as kitchens).

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 at any point (high temperature, new continuous cough or loss or change to your sense of smell or taste), you must immediately let a member of staff know and leave the hospital as soon as possible.

You and your family will not be expected to isolate after your child's operation, although complying with social distancing recommendations will be expected.