

Barts Health NHS Trust: about your planned surgery

Planned surgery is restarting across our hospitals, starting with the most clinically urgent cases. We answer your questions below.

Is it safe for me to have surgery right now?

Yes. The NHS is open for business and it's safe for anyone to seek help when needed, including for planned surgery such as hip, knee and heart operations.

What steps are in place to keep patients safe?

We're still in a pandemic and so our hospitals look and feel different because of the precautions we've taken to protect our staff and patients.

All staff and visitors must wear face coverings, wash their hands often and maintain social distancing in order to maintain the highest standards of infection control. We're also regularly testing staff and patients to make sure they aren't passing on the virus. Staff working in our hospitals are wearing protective equipment, including masks. This may look scary at first, but we're doing everything we can to keep us all safe.

You may also be asked to attend some appointments, such as your pre-operative assessment, over the telephone or via a video call. This is to limit the number of people coming in to our hospitals. When you come in for surgery, you should try to avoid using public transport, where possible.

We've produced a series of short films which explain what you can expect when you visit our hospitals: www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/our-hospitals. You can also watch a short animation about how we're keeping our patients safe: <https://explainmyprocedure.com/covidsafebarts/>

Will I be treated alongside Covid patients?

No. We're caring for Covid-19 patients in dedicated areas, so the right infection control and measures are in place for them.

Do I need to self-isolate before and after my procedure?

Experts advise patients to follow strict social distancing and hand hygiene rules for 14 days before and after their operation so you do not inadvertently catch or pass on the coronavirus. This is to ensure you're as fit as possible prior to your operation and have a speedy recovery.



Some patients in more vulnerable groups may be asked to self-isolate before and after a planned procedure. If you have any concerns about what to do before your surgery, please speak to your clinical team.

Can I delay my surgery?

Our clinicians are prioritising the most urgent operations. If they suggest you should have your surgery now, it's because they think that going ahead with it is the best option for you. If you still have concerns, please speak to your clinical team.

Will I be tested? What if it comes back positive?

You will most likely be tested before you arrive at hospital. You may be tested again before your procedure. If you have symptoms before your surgery date, you should request a test as soon as possible and let us know. Similarly, if you've had contact with someone who has Covid-19, you should tell us straight away.

If you test positive before your surgery, your clinical team will decide whether your operation is urgent enough to take place. They will decide if the benefit of having your surgery now outweighs the risks of not going ahead.

Do I need to wear a mask?

All staff and visitors will need to wear a face mask or covering when arriving at our hospitals. Once you have made your way to the part of the hospital where you're being treated, you will most likely be able to remove this.

Can I have visitors?

To keep everyone in our hospitals safe at this time, we are restricting visitors. Visitors will only be allowed into clinical areas for patients who are at the end of their life, is a child, lacks capacity or is giving birth.

How can I prepare for surgery?

The best way to prepare for your surgery is to stay as fit and healthy as possible. This means following the advice given to you by your clinician team.

When will I be sent home?

How soon you are discharged will depend on your recovery. You may be asked to self-isolate at home for a few more days to reduce your chance of picking up the virus. You won't be discharged until it is safe and you have the right support in place.

Why is my surgery taking place in a private hospital?

Some patients are having operations in private hospitals, paid for by the NHS and using our own doctors and anaesthetists as part of a national agreement with the independent sector. This is to help us ensure we see more patients sooner whilst our hospitals.