



A lifetime of specialist care

Royal Brompton & Harefield   
NHS Foundation Trust

Harefield Hospital

# COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and heart surgery





## Contents

- Your heart surgery and Coronavirus 3
- How decisions are made 3
- Testing patients for the virus 3
- Transferring from another hospital 4
- Admission from home 5
- The next steps 6
- What happens if I develop COVID-19 while in hospital after my operation? 6
- Further information 7

*This leaflet gives you general information about COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and heart surgery. It does not replace the need for personal advice from a qualified healthcare professional. Please ask us if you have any questions.*

## Your heart surgery and Coronavirus

Coronavirus causes an illness called COVID-19. COVID-19 varies between people, with some having no or few symptoms, some being ill but managing at home and a small number needing admission to hospital and intensive care. Sadly, some people have a very severe response to COVID-19 and die.

Although most planned operations have been delayed during the COVID-19 outbreak, emergency cardiac (heart) operations and some urgent operations are still going ahead. This is because we think the risk is greater if the surgery is not carried out, than the risk posed by COVID-19.


## How decisions are made

If you are given this leaflet it means that you are being considered for surgery despite the current COVID-19 pandemic. This decision was made at a meeting attended by all the clinical teams involved in your care, including the cardiologist at your local hospital who referred you for surgery. It is called a multidisciplinary meeting. This panel of experts meets daily to review cases and decide upon the need for surgery, the planned operation and the timing of it. If you would like to discuss the implications of this decision and the impact that delaying your treatment may have, please talk to your surgeon.

## Testing patients for the virus

It is still too early to know enough about the implication of having contracted COVID-19, the course of the disease in the long term is unknown. But we do know that developing the infection after heart surgery and operating on someone who has the disease, may cause very serious illness.

To limit the chances of operating on patients who actually have COVID-19 but display no sign or symptoms of the disease, we are testing all people being admitted to the hospital to check if they are infected with the virus.



---

This is to ensure that we keep you as safe as possible and reduce the chance of spreading the virus to other patients or staff.

We will be doing two tests on **every patient** being admitted for heart surgery. They are:

- COVID-19 specific clinical review and questionnaire
- Deep nasal and throat swab

## Transferring from another hospital

If you are being transferred from another hospital directly to Harefield, you will have a clinical review and nasal swab test in your local hospital **before** transfer.

If your swab test is negative and clinical review satisfactory, you will be transferred. Shortly after arrival at Harefield Hospital you will have a repeated clinical review with the addition of the specific COVID-19 questionnaire, another deep nasal and throat swab test, and a CT scan of your chest to check for signs of COVID-19 infection.

**If both the nasal swab tests and the CT scan are negative, then you can proceed to surgery.**

If the CT scan is positive (shows signs of Coronavirus), and/or you develop symptoms at Harefield, you will be isolated and have further tests. Your surgery will be delayed until we are sure that you show a negative swab test result.

If the result of the nasal swab test at your local hospital is **positive**, we cannot transfer you to Harefield straightaway for the operation. Your surgery will need to be postponed (or even cancelled) until it becomes safe for you to undergo the operation. If the risk from delaying your operation is too high, the expert panel will review your case once again and may suggest an alternative treatment.

## Admission from home

For the swab test you will be asked to stay in your car while the deep nasal and throat swab is taken. You will then be asked to return home and avoid any further chance of becoming infected with Coronavirus in the period between your nasal/throat swab test and the day of the surgery.

The best way to minimise exposure to unwanted infection is to practise "Shielding". This is recommended for people who are extremely vulnerable clinically and involves very strict hygiene measures. More details can be found at:

[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](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)

You can go to [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) and put 'information for shielding' in the search bar.

We recognise that shielding is very strict and you may find it difficult to observe it if you live on your own. It is your responsibility and choice if you decide not to observe this practice.

The second best option is to observe strict self-isolation. You can find more information at:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance)

Please note that self-isolation is based on stricter guidelines than the social distancing which is currently being followed by the rest of the population.



---

## The next steps

Your case will then be discussed at a daily multidisciplinary (MDT) meeting attended by all the clinical teams involved in your care (see How decisions are made on page 2). If they decide your case is urgent, you will be called by a member of the Fitness for Surgery team and asked to complete a COVID-19 questionnaire over the phone.

Once you have completed the questionnaire, you will need to stay at home in strict isolation until you are admitted for surgery. A member of the COVID-19 screening team will then call you to ask you to visit the hospital to have a COVID-19 screening swab taken 48-72 hours before you are admitted for surgery. The Fitness for Surgery team will provide you with information about isolation.

If you develop any symptoms at any point during this period, you **MUST** inform the Fitness for Surgery team and arrange to be retested.

Once admitted to Harefield, if you develop symptoms you will have further testing. If these show evidence of COVID-19 you will be placed in isolation and your surgery will be delayed until your test is negative.

If you remain symptom free and the swab test is negative, then you will be able to proceed with surgery.

## What happens if I develop COVID-19 while in hospital after my operation?

Every hospital in the UK has treated patients with COVID-19 and this includes Harefield Hospital. We have designated some areas of the hospital for the treatment of patients with COVID-19, and other areas for patients who require urgent or emergency surgery.

Despite all the precautions described in this leaflet there

remains a risk that you may get infected with coronavirus in hospital. This is because people can have no symptoms of infection and are therefore not tested. We will do everything we can to prevent you catching COVID-19 at Harefield Hospital but, as with any infection, we cannot guarantee this. Clinicians on the expert panel at Harefield Hospital have agreed that you should be offered surgery because they feel that the best treatment for you is to have an operation rather than wait.

Although the risk of developing COVID-19 after surgery is currently thought to be relatively low, developing the infection after heart surgery may cause very serious illness. In the worst-case scenario, this may mean that you have to go back onto a ventilator to help with breathing. If this happens, the risk of dying is significantly increased.

The surgical and anaesthetic team will discuss this with you in more detail and answer any questions you have. They will give you advice about weighing up the risks so that you can make an informed decision about whether to go ahead with surgery at the present time.

## Further information

For further information about COVID-19 and your heart surgery please contact the Fitness For Surgery team on **01895 828 542** (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm).

---

If you have concerns about any aspect of the service you have received in hospital and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on:

- Harefield Hospital – 01895 826 572

You can also email [pals@rbht.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@rbht.nhs.uk). This is a confidential service.

Harefield Hospital  
Hill End Road  
Harefield  
Middlesex  
UB9 6JH  
Tel: 0330 12 88121

Website: [www.rbht.nhs.uk](http://www.rbht.nhs.uk)

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على ترجمة فورية لمضمون هذه الوثيقة إلى اللغة العربية، يرجى منك الاتصال بأحد مستخدمينا بجناح المصلحة التي يتم فيها استشفائك. أحد موظفينا سيسعى لترتيب إجراءات الترجمة وإتمامها في الوقت المناسب لك.

Brosurteki bilginin Türkçe tercumesi için tedavi görüyor olduğunuz bölüme bas vurunuz. Bölüm personeli tercümenin gerçekleşmesini en kısa zamanda ayarlayacaktır.

