

The McNair Centre

Gynaecology outpatient department

This leaflet explains more about the services provided by the gynaecology outpatient department. It gives you a brief description of the main clinics we run and what they are for. If you have any questions, please speak to a member of staff caring for you.

About the gynaecology outpatient department

The gynaecology outpatient department sees women about problems with their reproductive organs. It has 15 medical consultants, a nurse consultant and a team of nursing staff.

The department runs general gynaecology clinics and specialist clinics. Doctors, nurses and administrative staff all work together to make sure that your journey through the outpatient department is a smooth one.

All patients need to be referred to the department by a GP or other medical doctor. If you feel you need to be seen in one of our clinics, please visit your GP and ask them to refer you to us. Please do not turn up and expect to be seen without a booked appointment.

What clinics are offered in the gynaecology outpatient department?

The following clinics are offered in the gynaecology outpatient department:

General outpatients clinic

This clinic provides consultation and management for women experiencing problems such as heavy or painful periods, fibroids (non-cancerous growths) or pain in the pelvis (the area below your tummy button).

You may need to have investigations such as blood tests or a pelvic scan before coming to this clinic.

Pre-assessment clinics

These clinics are nurse-led and run alongside the general outpatients clinic. We offer a pre-assessment clinic for surgery, so if possible we can assess you and perform any tests on the same day as your clinic visit.

The clinic nurses assess women booked for surgery at their pre-assessment or at an appointment shortly before their surgery date. They check that there have not been any significant changes to your original problem since your last appointment. They also make sure that you are physically fit for surgery and understand what it involves.

All investigations and blood tests needed before surgery will be done in this clinic. Patients who are likely to have problems due to anaesthetic (being put to sleep during surgery) will be identified at this clinic, and a plan will be put together to lower the risk of complications.

Menopause and early menopause clinics

These clinics are run by a medical consultant and a nurse consultant. They see women who have a wide range of menopausal problems, such as early menopause, problems finding the correct hormone replacement therapy (HRT), bleeding while taking HRT, severe menopause symptoms, and women who need specialist care as they have other medical conditions.

There are also facilities available to investigate abnormal bleeding within this clinic.

Minor procedures clinic

These are clinics for consultation, diagnosis and treatment. You will see either a nurse or a doctor who will carry out any investigations needed to diagnose your problem, explain what could be wrong and offer advice and/or treatment. The minor procedure clinics see women with:

- abnormal or heavy vaginal bleeding, such as bleeding in between periods
- cervical polyps (small growths of tissue on the neck of your womb)
- heavy or offensive (bad) smelling vaginal discharge
- problems with their vagina or vulva (skin folds surrounding the vaginal opening)
- problems with coils (a device used for contraception).

This clinic also sees women considering sterilisation (permanent contraception) to discuss the options and help them to make an informed decision. There are two main ways of performing this procedure:

- laparoscopic (a small cut is made in your tummy, then clips are put on your fallopian tubes)
- hysteroscopic (a tube is inserted into your vagina and inserts are put in to block your fallopian tubes).

Hysteroscopic sterilisation can be performed in this clinic at a second appointment, after your initial consultation and assessment. If you decide against sterilisation we will advise you on long-term contraception.

While you are at this clinic and depending on your symptoms, you may be offered:

- an **ultrasound scan** – this involves placing a small ultrasound probe into your vagina, so your doctor or nurse can see an ultrasound ‘picture’ of your ovaries and womb
- a **physical examination**, blood tests, swab tests and a cervical smear test
- a **hysteroscopy** – this is where a small instrument with a camera on the end is passed through your vagina and the neck of your womb (cervix) to look inside your womb
- a **biopsy** (tissue sample) of the lining of your womb
- a biopsy and **removal of polyps/skin tags** (small growths of skin) found on the vulva or cervix
- **cauterisation of your cervix** (removal of a layer of cells by heat, to prevent bleeding).

We will send you a detailed information leaflet explaining your treatment with your appointment letter.

Urogynaecology clinic

This clinic is for women experiencing problems with passing urine or prolapse (where an organ in your pelvis drops down from its normal position). It is led by two urogynaecologists (doctors who specialise in treating these kind of problems). A continence clinic and a ring pessary clinic run alongside the urogynaecology clinic:

Conservative continence clinic

A specialist nurse runs the conservative continence clinic. Advice is given for all types of urinary incontinence (accidental passing of urine), most commonly overactivity of the bladder and stress incontinence (where you accidentally leak urine, for example when you sneeze, laugh or exercise). The following treatments and advice are given:

- pelvic floor exercises
- vaginal cones
- electrical stimulation and biofeedback
- bladder retraining
- advice on drinking fluids
- bowels – advice on constipation and general bowel problems
- advice on improving your health
- teaching women who have problems emptying their bladders how to use a catheter (a flexible tube to drain urine from the bladder)
- classes for those waiting for prolapse or incontinence surgery
- support for women after urogynaecological surgery.

Ring pessary clinic

The ring pessary clinic is run by a nurse and is for women who need a vaginal pessary inserted or changed. Pessaries are a device placed in the vagina to manage prolapse. This clinic offers women attending the benefit of seeing the same nurse at each visit, helping them to feel more relaxed and less anxious about their appointment.

Colposcopy clinic

Colposcopy is an examination of the cervix and the vaginal wall using a special microscope. This is a central part of the NHS Cervical Screening Programme, which aims to detect early problems and reduce the number of women who develop cervical cancer.

If you have an abnormal cervical screening (smear test) result, you may be referred for a colposcopy examination. A doctor or nurse trained to carry out this procedure will look at your cervix to find and treat any possible problems. About one in 12 cytology results come back as abnormal. However, an abnormal result very rarely means that you have cancer. Nurses are always available to give advice or to discuss any concerns about your examination and/or treatment. Treatment may be offered at your first visit to the clinic, if appropriate.

Reproductive medicine clinic

This clinic gives advice to women and their partners who are experiencing difficulties conceiving or who have repeatedly experienced problems in early pregnancy. It is linked with the Assisted Conception Unit on the 11th floor of Guy's Tower Wing.

The clinic team consists of consultant gynaecologists (doctors who specialise in gynaecology) and other senior doctors who help patients with reduced fertility.

Ambulatory clinic

This clinic is run by a consultant assisted by two nurses. It offers women with small polyps and fibroids (growths) the opportunity to have these removed in an outpatient setting. Local anaesthetic and pain relief is provided but patients are not given a general anaesthetic (put to sleep) or any sedation.

Endometriosis clinic

These clinics are run by medical consultants and a nurse specialist. We are a specialist centre and this clinic provides consultations and support for women with severe endometriosis. Endometriosis is a painful condition where tissue that behaves like the lining of the womb (the endometrium) is found outside the womb.

Recurrent miscarriage clinic

This clinic is run by medical consultants and a nurse specialist and is for women who have had three or more miscarriages. Your initial appointment is likely to be with a specialist nurse sonographer (who specialises in taking scans) for a scan and some blood tests. The next appointment will be with one of the medical doctors who will discuss the results with you, any more investigations that you need and possible treatment options.

Useful sources of information

The Bladder and Bowel Foundation offers advice and assistance from specially trained nurses.

t: 01536 533 255 Monday to Friday, 9.30am–1pm

e: info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org

w: www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

Macmillan Cancer Support (freephone)

t: 0808 808 0000 (for information on all aspects of cancer)

w: www.macmillan.org.uk

Cancer Research UK has a patient information website, with information on all types of cancer and treatment options, as well as a book list for further information.

w: www.cancerhelp.org.uk

The Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome Association provides information and support to women with polycystic ovary syndrome.

w: www.pcosupport.org (US website)

The National Association for Premenstrual Syndrome raises awareness and provides information on premenstrual syndrome.

w: www.pms.org.uk

The National Endometriosis Society is a charity that raises awareness of endometriosis and provides local support networks around the UK.

w: www.endo.org.uk

Women's Health Concern is a charity that aims to educate and support women by providing unbiased, accurate information on a range of gynaecological conditions.

t: 0845 123 2319 (local rate call) Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

e: counselling@womens-health-concern.org **w:** www.womens-health-concern.org

The Daisy Network is a charitable support group that provides information about premature menopause and the issues around it.
w: www.daisynetwork.org.uk

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority is a statutory body that regulates all UK clinics offering IVF (in vitro fertilisation). It provides information to patients about infertility and how to choose a clinic.
w: www.hfea.gov.uk

Contact us

For more information on any of the clinics, please contact the **gynaecology outpatient department** on **020 7188 3584**.

Help us to improve our services

If you would like to be part of a user group and help develop services in the gynaecology outpatient department, please speak to the senior nurse in the clinic you attend.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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