


Having surgery at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals

This leaflet gives you information about what you can expect to happen when you have surgery in our hospital. It also gives you advice and guidance on how you, your family and friends can prepare for your surgery. If you will need an interpreter on the day of your surgery or information about your care in a different language or format please phone 020 7188 8815 or email languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk.



After your outpatient appointment

Following your outpatient appointment you will receive an admissions letter giving you a date for your surgery and advice on how to prepare. Your letter will also advise whether you will be admitted to hospital through a ward, Surgical Admissions Lounge (SAL) or Day Surgery Unit (DSU) and whether your surgery is at Guy's hospital or at St Thomas' hospital.



It is important that if you cannot make this date, you call the number on your admission letter to advise us and reschedule. Missed appointments cost the NHS and mean other patients' treatment and care will be delayed.

The SAL and DSU are pre-admission waiting areas which allow you to be admitted and prepared on the day of your surgery which means that you can stay at home the night before. Your admission letter will confirm what date and time to arrive.



Preparing at home in the days before your surgery

Feeling unwell?

If you have flu, cold or cough symptoms, chest problems, diarrhoea, vomiting or have been exposed to chickenpox, you must contact the number on your admission letter. Your surgery may need to be rescheduled to make your procedure as safe as possible.

Lifestyle changes

We recommend you stop smoking as early as possible prior to surgery to help reduce the risk of post-operative complications. The hospital and its grounds are non-smoking. Stopping the use of any recreational drugs will also reduce complications during surgery.

If you would like to give up smoking, please call the Trust stop smoking service on **020 7188 0995**, or call the NHS Smoking Helpline on **0300 123 1044**.

Eating a balanced diet and working towards a healthy BMI (Body Mass Index) is always helpful to minimise complications during and after surgery. See our A-Z in this leaflet for more advice.


Medication

Please bring any medication you are currently taking with you on the day of admission in its original packaging. We advise that you buy non-prescription painkillers before your day of surgery if you are going home on the same day. Buying Paracetamol and Ibuprofen (if safe for you) before coming to hospital may save you waiting for our pharmacy to administer them. We recommend you buy single ingredient pain relief rather than combined products, such as those with added caffeine. Any high street pharmacist will be able to guide you on these products. If you are unable to buy these, we will provide you with pain relief medication.

What to bring to the hospital

You should prepare a bag for your stay. This should be no bigger than a standard supermarket shopping bag.

On page 5 you will find a checklist of items to put in this bag.



Please do not bring valuables, such as jewellery, large sums of money, multiple credit cards or expensive electrical items (except mobile phone). There are no facilities to store valuables. The hospital will not be liable for loss or damage.

What about work?

You will need to notify your employer about your absence during your surgery and recovery. As a minimum you must take the day of surgery and the day after off from work. Your surgeon will advise if you require longer. If you are likely to need longer than seven days absence from work, we will provide you with a fit note on discharge. Any subsequent fit notes will need to be obtained from your GP. You can find further advice on what activities to avoid immediately after surgery in our **Having an Anaesthetic** booklet.

Planning for your return home

As you will need time to recover at home following your surgery you may find it helpful to think about the following in advance:

- how you will get to and from the hospital (see travel information on back page)
- Arranging for an adult to collect you from the hospital and stay with you for 24 hours after discharge
- what food, supplies and shopping you have at home
- what childcare you may need to arrange; and
- what important decisions and activities you may need to undertake in the days following surgery e.g. signing contracts.



On the day of your surgery

If you are going to be admitted to the ward please follow the instructions on your admission letter on who to call on the day of surgery. You do not need to make this call if you are going to be admitted to the SAL or DSU.

Can I eat or drink?

If you have been given specific food or bowel preparation instructions important to your surgery, then please follow them. If you have not been given specific instructions, the following guidance applies:

If you are scheduled to come in before 11am	Food	Water
Before 2am	✓ yes	✓ yes
2am – 6am	✗ no	✓ yes
After 6am	✗ no	✗ no


If you are scheduled to come in after 11am	Food	Water
Before 7am	✓ yes (see below)*	✓ yes
7am – 11am	✗ no	✓ yes
From 11am	✗ no	✗ no

* a light breakfast of tea or coffee with cereal or toast

There is no benefit in fasting for longer periods of time.


What happens on the day?

On admission to SAL, DSU or the ward, a member of nursing staff will help prepare you for surgery. This includes completing the necessary paperwork, undertaking clinical observations and providing you with any surgical garments you may need to wear. If you are a female under the age of 55 you will need to take a pregnancy test.

 You must inform us if you are going to be late, by calling the SAL, DSU or ward named on your admissions letter.

You will then meet with a member of your surgical team and your anaesthetist to go through the surgical procedure and anaesthetic process.

You will be asked to sign a consent form which states that you agree to have the treatment you are having and you understand what it involves. Both your surgeon and your anaesthetist will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

 In the days before your surgery, you might find it helpful to make a note of any questions you or your family may wish to ask your surgeon or anaesthetist.

How long will I need to wait?

The time on your letter is the admission time - not the surgery time. Your surgeon or anaesthetist will do their best to advise you how long you may have to wait, but unfortunately it can be unpredictable. It is worth bringing something to help occupy the time.

Can I bring someone with me?

Our DSU and most of our SAL areas are drop-off and pick-up only and so accompanying adults **cannot stay** and wait with you. This is due to limited space and to prioritise the safety, security and dignity of our patients.

If you are particularly concerned about this or wish to advise us of exceptional circumstances, please ask to speak to a member of our staff in confidence when you arrive, or contact us in advance using the number on your admissions letter. We will do our best to help accommodate you where possible.

Information for your accompanying adult

Our DSU is drop-off and pick-up only. Accompanying adults cannot wait there and children are strictly prohibited. If you choose to wait on the hospital grounds, please be aware that this may be a significant wait. There are a number of cafés, restaurants and waiting spaces which staff can direct you to.

We will need a way to contact you as the nominated adult on the day of surgery. Please make sure your phone is fully charged and that you are contactable throughout the day. We will contact you when the patient you are accompanying is nearly ready for discharge home.

You will be able to see the patient you are accompanying after they have completed their time in recovery and will be advised on where to collect them from. You will need to help escort them home and ensure there is some provision of care and support by a responsible adult for the first 24hrs.

This includes:

- help with household activities such as cooking
- offering plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic)
- help with washing or dressing if required; and
- calling for help if any post-surgery problems arise.

If you have any concerns or questions about how you can best care for your friend or relative, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff on the day.



Recovering in hospital

You will recover from the immediate effects of your surgery in a recovery area, where we will assist with any post-surgery pain and sickness. Each person will recover at different rates. From there you will either be discharged home or admitted to a ward. Your doctors will tell you if you need to stay overnight. If you are unsure, please ask.

If you are admitted to a ward, the nursing team will provide you with relevant welcome information about that ward, including visiting times and facilities. You and your accompanying friend or family member will be notified on the day which ward you will be going to.

If you are being discharged home on the same day, you will move to a single-sex patient only discharge lounge, where you will be given some light refreshments and have your last set of clinical checks from our nursing team. You may want to bring your own light snack if you have any special dietary requirements. Please do not bring food that requires reheating.

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It is important we have contact details for the responsible adult accompanying you home so that we can call them in good time to collect you from DSU or the ward. Please have these details to hand.



Being discharged home

After your surgery you will be advised on how to take your medications. Please follow these instructions. We will let you know if you need any follow up appointments before you are discharged and appointment details will be posted to you.



Recovering at home

It is essential that you arrange to have an adult to stay with you for the first 24 hours after your surgery.

You may find that it takes you a few days or weeks to feel fully recovered following your surgery. Every patient recovers differently and there is no definite rule as to when you can start doing your usual activities again. This will depend on the type of surgery you have had and your surgeon may give you specific advice. Our general advice for the first 48 hours after your surgery is:

Do not:

- drive a car or ride a bike
- operate machinery
- cook, use sharp utensils or pour hot liquids
- drink alcohol
- smoke
- take sleeping tablets
- make important decisions or sign contracts.

Checklist for your preparation bag

- Your admission letter and any information we have sent you regarding your surgery
- Any medications including sprays, patches, creams, drops or inhalers, in their original packaging
- The name, address with post code and telephone number for your GP
- Small amounts of money (to buy newspapers, television credits or other items)
- Nightclothes and comfortable day clothes (if you are planning to stay on the ward)
- Your glasses, contact lenses and any mobility or hearing aids
- Bathing toiletries and sanitary products; including toothbrush, hairbrush
- Slippers and dressing gown
- Items of religious importance to you
- Something to help occupy your time either when waiting for surgery or on the ward
- Your mobile phone and charger
- If you have special dietary requirements you may want to bring a light snack. Please do not bring any food that requires reheating

A-Z of additional information

Accessibility All pedestrian entrances to the hospitals are suitable for wheelchairs. There are accessible toilets in key locations. Hearing induction loops are also available at our reception desks.

Accommodation There is a range of accommodation available on both the Guy's and St Thomas' hospital sites. You can find more information on our website.

<http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/visiting/hospital-accommodation.aspx>

BMI Guidance on how to understand and improve this can be found on NHS Choices website at <http://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/Healthyweightcalculator.aspx>

Cash Machines There is a cashpoint next to main reception at the St. Thomas' main entrance and one in the convenience store at Guy's Hospital

Complaints and feedback 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

Food Both hospitals have canteens serving hot and cold food, as well as coffee shops and convenience stores.

Language and accessible support services If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch. t:020 7188 8815 e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

Maps You can find maps of the hospital grounds at main reception desks on our website:

<http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/at-hospitals/finding-your-way.aspx>

Mobiles Please keep them on silent/discreet mode in clinical areas.

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 by dialling 111

NHS Choices Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health at www.nhs.uk

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline. t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Smoking The hospital and its grounds are non-smoking.

Travel The nearest underground stations to St Thomas' hospital are Westminster and Waterloo. The nearest to Guy's Hospital is London Bridge. Further information on how to get to the hospitals can be found on our website: <http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/getting-here/getting-here.aspx>. We advise you to check Transport for London's website in advance of travel to check for disruptions and alternative routes. We would advise you not to drive to the hospitals as there is limited parking, which has an hourly charge. Both hospitals are within the London Congestion Charge zone.

If you are on low income benefits there may be help available for your travel costs and Congestion Charge. Contact the cashier's office on 020 7188 2329 for further advice.

If you need to use our patient transport service please contact the assessment team on 020 7188 2888. They will conduct a confidential telephone interview to assess your eligibility.

Wifi Free wifi is provided through the WIFISpark hotspot.



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