



**Northumbria Healthcare**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Attending ambulatory care unit for surgery

Issued by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

## Introduction

You will have received this information leaflet if you have been asked to attend Ambulatory Care for surgery.

Please read and follow the instructions given to ensure you are appropriately prepared for surgery. You are likely to need a general anaesthetic (you will be asleep) for the procedure and so correct preparation is vital. Your operation may be possible under local anaesthetic (numbing an area) in which case the post-operative advice you will be given is different, but unless specifically told otherwise come prepared to have a general anaesthetic.

## Planning in advance

**Let us know if you can't make it** - If you are unable to attend for your appointment date it is important that you inform us as soon as possible. Please call 0191 607 2008.

**Knowing what time to come in** - Please arrive at ambulatory care at 7:30am. This will allow for further assessment by the ambulatory care teams. If you need an operation you will be allocated to an emergency or trauma operating list. As a result, timings may be unpredictable, changed at short notice and lead to extended waiting times. We appreciate your understanding in this matter.

**Knowing where to go** - The ambulatory care unit is situated in Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital in Cramlington. It is on floor 1, the same level as the main entrance and signposted 'Ambulatory Care', along the right-hand corridor at the front of the emergency department waiting area. Please report to the ambulatory care reception where the staff will check you in and show you where to go next.

**What to bring with you** - Please bring with you your usual medications and any medical devices you use at home (e.g. CPAP machine).

**Ensure everything at home is in place** – It is likely you will spend most of the day in hospital and may need to stay overnight in hospital. Please make the necessary arrangements for any home or work commitments you may have, e.g. family, pets. You may well need time off work following your operation.

**Ensure you have bought simple pain killers for after your operation** – please make sure you have paracetamol and ibuprofen (if you can take it) in stock at home before you come in to hospital. These are much cheaper bought over the counter than if you have to pay a prescription charge for them in hospital. Please take these at home before leaving for hospital so that the pain killers have time to build up in your body.

**Aftercare** – if you have had a general anaesthetic or sedation you will need a responsible adult to collect you and escort you home and to stay with you for the next 24 hours (taxi drivers / public transport drivers are not classed as an escort). Please have the contact number of the responsible person who will be taking you home so that we can contact them if necessary.

**Smoking** – please try to stop or cut down in the run up to your operation. This reduces the chance of you having complications around the time of your surgery such as a chest infection and delayed wound healing. It also reduces your risk over the longer term of developing more serious smoking related illnesses. We do recognise that this is an anxious and stressful time for you. You cannot smoke or vape on hospital grounds and once admitted to ambulatory care you should not leave the department, this includes going somewhere to smoke. Your surgery may be cancelled if this occurs.

## On the day of operation

**Bath and shower** – If possible please have a shower or a bath before coming in for your surgery.

**Make-up** - Please wear as little make-up as possible and bring a means of removing it.

**Nails** – Ideally, removing nail varnish is helpful for vital monitoring during your procedure. However, if you have gel nails that are hard to remove it is not essential to do this.

**Jewellery and piercings** - You will be asked to remove all jewellery for your operation other than a simple wedding band, so it is advisable to leave other items of jewellery at home. If possible, please remove any body piercing items including those advertised as 'medical compatible'.

**Shaving** – Please do not shave hairs away from the area to be operated on. This will be done in theatre if necessary.

**Food and drink** - It is essential that you follow the instructions provided regarding eating and drinking on the day of your operation. It is unsafe to give you an anaesthetic or sedation if these instructions are not followed, and your operation will be delayed. Maintaining hydration and avoiding distressing symptoms such as dry mouth is important for you while you wait, and helps with your post-operative recovery. However, food or large volumes of fluid in the stomach can be dangerous under anaesthetic. It is fine to take tablets during this fasting time, including pain killers and your usual medication (see medication section).

Please follow these guidelines:

- No food after midnight.
- Tea or coffee with a little milk can be drunk until 6:30am
- You may drink water (non-fizzy) until you arrive at ambulatory care.

Hydration is important - please drink a glass of water or cup of tea/coffee before leaving for hospital with 06:30 cut off as above for tea/ coffee.

Once in ambulatory care you will be offered water, depending on the time of your operation and the advice of your anaesthetist. Please ask a nurse for water if you are thirsty.

## Medication

**Medicines and allergy treatments – Please bring your usual medications with you** on the day of surgery. Generally, we advise that you take all your regular morning medication as usual on the day of operation, but you must follow any advice given to you by the medical team referring you to ambulatory care.

Take your morning medicines with your drink at 6:30am, apart from:

- Omit all herbal or complementary medicines (bought over the counter)
- Blood pressure medications: do not take medications ending in -pril or –artan
- Blood thinners: do not take blood thinning medications on the morning of surgery
- Diabetic medication: you will be advised what to do by the doctor before your admission

We advise that you take paracetamol and ibuprofen (if you are able) as instructed on the packet in the morning before leaving home. If you take long term pain medication, please take these at the usual time as well. This will help with pain relief for your procedure.

Please inform staff of any allergies you may have and bring a list of these with you in case you forget their names.

## What to bring

**Clothes** – It is important that you wear comfortable, loose fitting clothing to reduce discomfort from the site of your operation, and allow for extra bulk from bandages or dressings. Please bring easy fastening, comfortable footwear for walking between ambulatory care and theatre.

**Something to occupy your time** – The order of patient treatment in a theatre list is prioritised by your surgeon and anaesthetist according to patient or theatre factors. Dependent on your place on the list, you may have a few hours to wait before your surgery. Please feel free to bring reading materials or something similar to occupy your time. You may listen to music on your mobile device through earphones while on the ward, and if your operation is done under local anaesthetic you will also benefit from listening to music at this time.

**Leave valuables at home** – Please try to avoid bringing anything of significant value as the trust does not accept responsibility for any such items. Mobile phones can be used for essential calls and should be left on silent at all times.

**Contact number** - Bring the contact number of whoever will be picking you up.

## Arriving at Northumbria Healthcare Emergency Care Hospital, Cramlington

**Report to ACU reception** – On arrival please go to the ambulatory care reception to be registered onto the unit. A nurse will allocate you a bed, help to complete the admission process and to prepare you for surgery. The unit is a mixed ward, but your privacy and dignity will be maintained at all times.

**Preparation** - The nurse will take you to your bed space, fill in a checking/safety questionnaire and give you a hospital identity bracelet to wear. This has your name and details on it. If you are allergic to anything such as certain foods, medications or latex, please tell the nurse and they will give you a red bracelet.

You must wear the identity bracelet all the time you are in the hospital. They are important parts of our safety procedures and help us to do things such as checking that you are given the right medicines.

The nurse will weigh you, take your temperature and blood pressure. You will be asked to put on a cotton hospital gown and given stockings to wear if required - these will help prevent you getting blood clots in your legs. Please let us know if your religion requires you to keep your head covered.

You will be asked to remove all jewellery, body piercings and contact lenses. You can keep your wedding ring on – this will be covered with tape.

Hearing aids and dentures can be worn into theatre, but we may ask you to take them out if necessary when you come to the operating theatre suite.

The nurse will double check your personal details before taking you to the operating theatre.

**Ask any questions** – Once admitted, you will be seen by your consultant surgeon and consultant anaesthetist or their deputies. They will assess you, explain the procedure and ask you to sign the consent form for surgery and anaesthesia. You will be able to ask any questions regarding your procedure with the surgeon there to answer before signing the form.

**Carers / relatives** – You may have one carer or relative who can stay with you on ambulatory care during your visit. They may stay on the unit while you are in theatre if they wish. No children under 12 years old are allowed on the unit. This may be affected by trustwide visitor restrictions, if you are concerned about this please call ahead.

**Transfer to theatre** – If you were able to walk in to hospital, you will be asked to walk to the theatre suite. Walking helps maintain the body's temperature and normal function which reduces risks and improves recovery. You will be given an extra gown to wear for warmth and dignity, and put on your own comfortable footwear. A porter and nurse will escort you to the theatre suite.

If you are unable to walk or pain is limiting your mobility, you will be taken to the theatre on a trolley.

## After your procedure

**Recovery** - You will be taken to the recovery area where you will be monitored and cared for by a recovery nurse while you wake up fully.

We will ensure that any symptoms following surgery and anaesthesia are controlled and your recovery optimized. You will be given water to drink in recovery before going back to ambulatory care.

Once back on ambulatory care you will be offered a hot drink and a sandwich while you recover fully. Your nurse will provide you with post-operation care advice, new medication as needed and answer any questions you may have. You will usually be ready to leave hospital about two hours after your surgery.

**Admission to hospital** - Rarely, you may need to stay overnight because you need help managing pain, sickness or because of unexpected problems during your procedure.

## Getting home

Your discharge time will depend on your time of surgery, its duration and your fitness afterwards.

**Arrange for a responsible adult to collect or accompany you home** – Once discharged from ambulatory care, it is essential that you are accompanied by an adult able to remain with you, and be responsible for you for 24 hours. Even if you are having a local anaesthetic it is useful to have someone to take you home.

**Medication, including pain relief** – Pain killers may be given before, during or after your operation. These may be by tablet, injection or occasionally suppository.

**It is essential to have suitable pain killers at home to help maintain your comfort. You should buy the simple pain killers, paracetamol and ibuprofen (if tolerated), before you come in for your operation.** You may be given stronger pain killers to take home with you, and provided with information about how to take these.

If we prescribe you any tablets or medicines, we will give you enough for three to seven days. Please ask us about possible side effects from these new medicines. If you need to continue treatment, you must contact your GP to arrange this. The letter to your GP will contain details of the medications we have given to you.

**Fit (sick) note** – If you require a fit note, please ask the ambulatory care nurses when admitted so that this can be processed by the doctors.

## Post-operative care once discharged

We will send you and your GP copies of your discharge letter which will have details about your procedure.

You will be given written discharge advice to take home with you after your procedure. If you or your relatives have any questions before you leave for home, please speak to one of our nurses.

## When you get home

You may feel tired, so only do as much as you feel able. Please follow the specific advice we give you about taking your prescribed medication, including painkillers, and post-operative physiotherapy exercises.

### **If you had a general anaesthetic:**

- do not use machinery or drive a car for the first 48 hours – please note that the nature of your operation may mean that this period is much longer. We will tell you if you need a longer period.
- drink plenty of fluids and eat light meals but do not drink any alcohol for at least 24 hours.
- do not make any important decisions or sign any contracts for at least 24 hours.

In the first 24 hours, your carer needs to:

- take you home by car or taxi, not public transport.
- stay with you for 24 hours in your or their home.
- help you with household activities, such as cooking and cleaning.
- give you plenty of fluids to drink but no alcohol.
- help you with washing/bathing and getting dressed.
- make sure you take painkillers regularly, as prescribed/advised.
- run errands for you.

## **If you have had a local anaesthetic:**

As long as you have not had any sedation, you do not require an escort home or supervision.

- we will advise you when it is safe to drive a car or use machinery, and when it is safe to start drinking alcohol.
- drink plenty of fluids and eat light meals

## **If you have any queries, or need advice before or after your surgery please do not hesitate to call:**

Ambulatory care unit - 0191 607 2008 open between 7:30am – 8pm.

The ACU is closed after 8pm. However, if you need simple advice that cannot wait until the morning, please contact the appropriate ward:

Ward 1 Orthopaedics - 0191 607 72001

Ward 15 General Surgery / Gynaecology - 0191 607 72015

## **If urgent assistance is required please attend the emergency department.**

Use this QR code for more information on nerve blocks for surgery on upper or lower limbs (PIN 567)



Use this QR code for more information on pain relief after day surgery (PIN143)

## Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

## Other sources of information

### NHS 111

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

PIN 960/V1

Review date: January 2024

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