

Outpatient services

Coming into hospital for an outpatient appointment

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

We are taking every precaution to protect our patients, staff and visitors in our hospitals during the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes changes to our care pathways, buildings and ways of working, such as offering video or telephone consultations where appropriate to avoid unnecessary visits.

Key points to note before and during your outpatient visit:

- please come to your appointment unaccompanied, to reduce the spread of infection, Carers are welcome to come to hospital to support patients' health and social needs
- arrive for your appointment no more than **five minutes early**, to maintain physical distancing in the waiting room from other patients and staff
- wear a face covering at all times, even if you have had the Covid-19 vaccine
- use hand sanitiser or wash your hands when you arrive at the hospital

Wearing face masks in hospital

You must wear a face covering or face mask at all times when in hospital – whether you are visiting a patient admitted as an inpatient or coming in for an appointment.



If you are unable to wear a face mask or face covering or need assistance due to your age, health or disability, or if you are deaf or hearing impaired, please contact the number on your clinic letter before you come into hospital.

Please bring your own face covering to hospital. It can be cloth or home-made, or be a scarf or bandana and should cover your mouth and nose. Face coverings worn as part of religious beliefs or cultural practice are acceptable, providing they are not loose and cover the mouth and nose. If you have had the Covid-19 vaccine, you must still wear a face covering or face mask.

Adapting our buildings and ways of working

We have made changes to our environment and the ways we work to keep patients and their carers safe. For example:

- there are also separate areas for patients who have tested positive for Covid-19 or are suspected of having Covid-19
- you will see our staff wearing surgical masks and, where necessary, additional personal protective equipment (PPE)
- around our buildings you will see reminders to maintain a physical distance from other patients and staff, and to wear a face covering or mask. You will also see information to support you when the using lifts
- we are offering staggered appointments so that there are fewer people waiting in one space



Changing or cancelling your appointment

It is important you are able to attend your appointment. If you need to change or cancel your appointment or you have any of the symptoms of Covid-19, please ring the department number in your appointment letter as soon as possible.

Coming into clinic

To reduce the spread of infection and enable social distancing, please come to your appointment on your own if possible. Carers are welcome to come to hospital to support patients' health and social needs. Although there are restrictions on visitors coming to hospitals, a familiar carer or supporter is not considered a visitor. We recognise carers play a vital role in supporting patients' communications needs – particularly where a patient has dementia, learning disabilities and/or autism.

We can provide carers with a 'carers passport' so that each patient's main carer can be identified easily. If you think you may need a carer with you, please discuss this with your care team before you come in, and let reception know when you arrive.

Make sure you use the **hand sanitiser** as you enter the hospital or wash your hands. At the entrances to the clinic you will be asked to sanitise your hands again, as you may have had to touch surfaces on your way to the clinic area.



Inside hospital you need to wear a face mask. You can pick up a face mask from one of the welcome stations at our entrances. If you know where you are going, be aware that there have been some changes to routes around the hospital, so please look out for new signage.

Consenting to treatment

We want to make sure that you fully understand your condition and the different treatment and care options available to you. Before you receive treatment, your doctor will explain the treatment plan including the benefits, risks and alternatives. Please ask your care team if you have any questions.

What to bring to your hospital appointment

You will need to bring the following:

- your appointment letter
- a list of any medication that you are currently taking
- a face covering

You may also need:

- money to pay for prescriptions, or an exemption card if you are entitled to free prescriptions

When you arrive

- keep two metres apart from other patients and staff members
- use the hand gel provided on arrival or wash your hands
- continue to wear a face covering and avoid touching your face
- follow any one-way route signs to direct you to your clinic room

Please be assured we will do everything we can to see you promptly.

Interpreting services

If you are coming to hospital for your appointment, your clinician can arrange for a telephone interpreter. The process takes 5-10 minutes, and you do not need to let us know in advance. If your appointment is by telephone, let your clinician know when they call you that you need an interpreter, and they can arrange this and call you back into a three-way consultation.

If your appointment is by video, please call **020 3311 7697** or email imperial.interpreting@nhs.net at least one week before your appointment and we will book a video interpreter for you.

If you need a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter please tell your GP, so they can advise us when they refer you to our services and we will organise an interpreter for you. Alternatively, please contact us directly at least 10 days before your appointment on 020 3311 7697 or email imperial.interpreting@nhs.net. This service is also available for video consultations.

After your appointment

If the doctor prescribes you a new or different medication, they will either write and inform your GP or give you a prescription to take to the hospital pharmacy.

Confidentiality

All of your information is kept confidential. We provide details of your clinical care to your GP and, where appropriate, other health and social care professionals who are supporting your care directly. This is to ensure your continued healthcare is safe and effective. Sometimes we may use this information to help improve our services or to inform our research. In these instances, we will remove any details which would make it possible to identify you.

Support with public transport travel costs

If you are entitled to have your travel expenses refunded, please speak to one of our receptionists, who will complete a form for you and direct you to the cashier's office. For more information on eligibility visit [healthcare travel cost scheme](#).

Participate in a clinical trial

If you are cared for at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, you may be invited to take part in a clinical trial. It is your decision whether to participate and if you decide not to, it will not affect your care in any way. To find out more:

Call us on **020 3313 8070**

Visit us at: www.imperial.nhs.uk/research

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3313 0088** (Charing Cross, Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals), or **020 3312 7777** (St Mary's and Western Eye hospitals). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:
Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

With the support of Imperial Health Charity, we now provide free premium wi-fi at our Trust.
Visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk/our-services/outpatients