

# Inpatient information and advice

## Welcome

Welcome to Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust. We provide acute and specialist care to around 1.3 million people a year through our five hospitals in central and west London – Charing Cross, Hammersmith, Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea, St Mary's and the Western Eye – as well as a growing number of community locations.

We want to provide you with the very best care and help you to be as healthy as possible. To do that, it is important that you know what to expect and that we know what matters to you. This way, we can work with you to make sure you have a comfortable and safe stay and get home, or on to the next stage of your care, without any delays.

We have changed the way we run our hospitals in response to Covid-19, so that we can manage any surge in demand and continue to keep all of our patients, visitors and staff safe.

This booklet explains how things have changed and what this might mean for you. Your clinical team will provide specific information about your ward and your treatment. Our response to Covid-19 continues to evolve as we learn more about the infection. We continue to update this booklet as and when there are further changes.

## Talk to us

If you need any help at any time, please do not hesitate to ask a member of staff and, if you can, please let us know what worked well and how we can do better.



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# Changes to how we run our hospitals in response to Covid-19

## **Changes to our services**

We have had to make temporary changes to the way services are organised. This has included:

- increasing intensive care capacity
- offering video or telephone consultations instead of face-to-face outpatient appointments for some patients
- bringing together some specialist services onto fewer sites so that they can be provided safely
- moving some staff into different clinical and non-clinical roles

These are temporary changes. However, we want to make sure we build on positive developments. For example, many patients have welcomed the opportunity for telephone or video consultations.

## **Changes to admissions**

You may be concerned about being in the same hospital as patients being treated for Covid-19 if you do not have the virus yourself. We would like to reassure you that there are lots of measures in place to manage risks, including separating patients with Covid-19 from those who do not have the virus. All patients, staff and permitted visitors are expected to wear a surgical mask (blue and white mask) to prevent the spread of Covid-19 to others. Our staff are also following the most up-to-date advice on infection control.

The safety of our patients and staff is our priority. You will be tested for Covid-19 before and/or when you are admitted to one of our hospitals and during your stay, even if you have no symptoms.

More information about the test is detailed in the *Stopping the spread of infection in hospital* section.

If you test positive for Covid-19, it does not mean that you will become unwell with the symptoms. We will monitor you closely to check if you develop symptoms during your stay. You may be moved to a different ward or clinical area. Some tests and procedures may be postponed if you test positive for Covid-19. Speak to your clinical team if you are concerned about this.

### **Changes on our wards**

Following national guidance, every patient coming to our hospitals is assigned to a care pathway according to their risk of having Covid-19. You will be assigned to a specific pathway based on:

- your symptoms
- your test results
- any exposure to suspected or confirmed positive Covid-19 contacts

This means patients with Covid-19 can be treated together in one place which minimises the risk of spreading the infection and allows us to continue to provide planned care.

We aim to provide patients with same-sex accommodation. However, at very busy times, some of our wards have had to become mixed-sex, although we always try to keep individual bays as same-sex and ensure privacy at all times.

The decision to change some wards to mixed-sex wards has been carefully considered – patient and staff safety remains our priority at all times. If you are worried about this, please speak to a member of staff.

We also have the ability to transform some wards and units into additional intensive care areas where we care for patients who are very unwell and who may need a ventilator to help them breathe.

### **Changes to our hospitals**

All patients and members of the public must wear a surgical face mask while in our hospitals. Once you are admitted to hospital, you will be provided with surgical masks to wear at all times. If you leave the ward or clinical area at any point to go to another part of the hospital, you should take off your mask, put it in the bin and replace it with a new mask which we will provide.

There are restrictions in place in some areas of our hospitals to assist with physical distancing and keep our patients, visitors and staff safe – our restaurants have a one-way system in place and our lifts have a maximum number of people allowed in at any one time.

### **Moving patients to other hospitals**

We provide some specialist services at only one of our sites and so you may need to be transferred from one of our five hospitals to another if you need that specialist care. We are also using our hospitals as flexibly as possible to cope with additional demand. You may be moved to a different ward, sometimes at a different hospital, if your needs change or where we have more beds available.

We're also working even more closely with other NHS trusts to ensure we continue to provide as much care as we can across the NHS, as safely as possible.

# Stopping the spread of infection in hospital

Patient and staff safety is our priority especially during Covid-19. To prevent the spread of the virus (and other organisms) we have a number of measures in place, including using a range of personal protective equipment (PPE), practising physical distancing and increasing hand hygiene and cleaning routines. We are also running a vaccination programme for our staff, as well as for some other health and care workers in north west London.

## **Clean your hands regularly**

To help reduce the spread of infection, including Covid-19, you should wash your hands with soap and water often – for at least 20 seconds. Where soap and water are not available, please use hand sanitiser gel.

Please wash your hands (or apply hand sanitiser gel):

- before eating – ask a member of staff if you need any help and a hand wipe will also be provided on your meal tray to make hand hygiene before eating easier
- after using the toilet
- before entering or leaving a ward, clinic or unit
- after touching your surgical mask to adjust or remove it

Always avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Hand sanitiser gel dispensers are near the entrance to all wards. Please speak to a member of staff if the dispenser needs refilling.

## **Ask us about hand washing**

Please speak to staff about hand washing practices if you have any questions or concerns. All staff have training on infection prevention and control and effective hand washing and we check this practice regularly.

## **Testing for Covid-19**

To make sure we are doing all we can to reduce the spread of Covid-19, all patients in our care are tested regularly for Covid-19, even if they have no symptoms.

If your admission is planned, you will be tested before you are admitted into our care. If your admission is not planned, the tests will take place after being admitted to our care on:

- the day of admission
- every day for the first seven days after admission
- every seven days after this for those patients who are in hospital for a week or longer

Many patients with Covid-19 will have symptoms, such as a new continuous cough, a high temperature and/or loss of taste and smell. However, people can have Covid-19 but not have any symptoms (asymptomatic), or can be in the very early stages of Covid-19 infection and will go on to develop symptoms later (pre-symptomatic).

We know that patients with both asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic Covid-19 infection can pass the virus onto others.



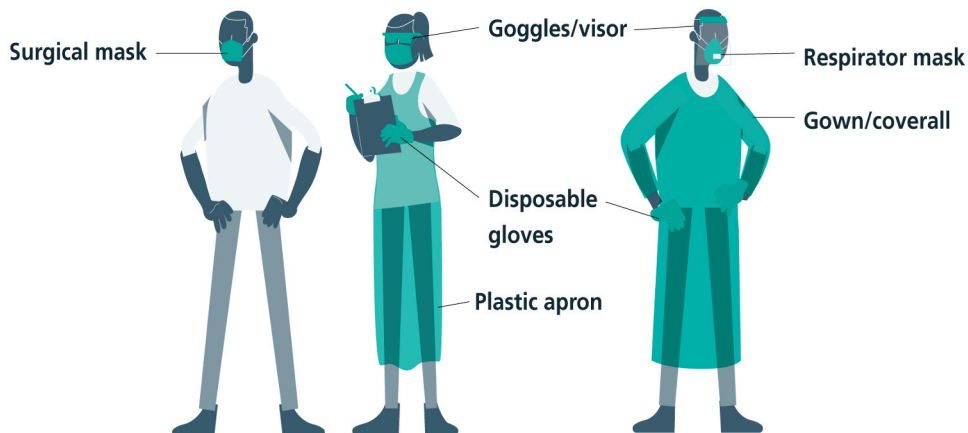
The test for Covid-19 is done using a swab. The swab is used to sample your throat and nose – this can feel uncomfortable but is not painful. The swab is sent to the laboratory, or processed in machines within the emergency department, and tested for Covid-19. The test will only show if you have Covid-19 at the time the swab was taken and will not tell you if you have had Covid-19 already or if you are going to get Covid-19.

## **Wearing a surgical mask**

While you are in our care we will ask you to wear a surgical mask at all times except while eating, drinking and sleeping. This is to protect you from getting Covid-19 and protect others in case you have it. We will provide you with the masks and you can ask anytime if you would like a fresh mask. If you are exempt from wearing a mask please speak to a member of staff. Please wash your hands every time you touch your mask.

## **Staff wearing masks, gloves and gowns**

All staff are required to wear a surgical mask when in our hospital buildings. When treating patients, our staff will be wearing a mask and may also be wearing eye protection, a disposable apron and disposable gloves. The graphic below provides examples of the protection your clinical team may wear during your care.



We know it can be harder to hear staff speaking when they are wearing masks and when you cannot see their facial expressions. Let staff know if you cannot hear or understand them clearly.

Please let us know if you are hard of hearing, if you lip-read or have any other communication needs.

### **Physical distancing – stay two metres apart where possible**

Please maintain a distance of two metres from others to stop the spread of infection. This is not always possible in a hospital, for example, when you are receiving care, but we encourage everyone to do this whenever they can. In circumstances where you cannot maintain a distance of two metres, please wear a surgical mask.

### **Healthcare-acquired infections**

There are other infections that you can get while in hospital but they can be avoided with good hygiene practice. If you get an infection you may have to stay in hospital longer. Please follow any advice given to you by your clinical team to reduce the risk of getting an infection.

### **Staff testing**

Our frontline staff have been provided with kits to test for Covid-19 at home, twice a week. Regularly testing our staff will help us to identify staff who may be infectious without symptoms so that they can self-isolate.

Under new national guidance, double-vaccinated frontline clinical NHS staff who have been told to self-isolate may be allowed to work in exceptional circumstances.

This new guidance does not apply to any member of staff who:

- has Covid-19 symptoms
- has been confirmed as being currently infected with Covid-19
- has been asked to isolate due to a known contact with someone confirmed to have Covid-19 e.g. a household member
- works in a service that provides care primarily for severely immune-compromised or clinically extremely vulnerable patients

Staff who are exempt will only be able to work if they meet strict daily testing criteria and continue to self-isolate when not at work. We will only use this process in exceptional circumstances.

## Keeping in touch with your family and friends

### **Visiting restrictions**

To keep everyone safe, we are only able to welcome a small number of visitors into our hospitals at the moment. We know how difficult it is to be separated from friends and family, and we will do everything we can to help you to stay in touch with your loved ones. We are regularly reviewing our visiting policies and hope to be able to allow more visitors into hospital when it is safe to do so.

### **Visiting an inpatient**

All inpatients can have one named visitor for one hour once a day, providing the visit is booked in advance. This named visitor needs to be the same visitor throughout your inpatient stay. Visitors should contact the ward where their friend or family member is staying to agree when they can visit.

## **Visiting a child**

Two parents or guardians can visit a child on a hospital ward at the same time. They should discuss visiting times and lengths of visits with the care team looking after their child.

## **Visiting a patient at the end of their life**

Patients at the end of their life can have separate visits from up to three named visitors. Named visitors, visiting times and length of visit should be agreed with the patient's care team before visitors come into hospital.

## **Exceptional circumstances**

Every patient has different needs and we know that there are exceptional circumstances where we need to adapt our visiting policy. Visitors should speak to the patient's care team to discuss the best approach.

## **Temporary visiting suspensions**

In areas or wards where there have been several cases of Covid-19, we may suspend visiting temporarily to keep patients, visitors and staff safe. The clinical team will keep you updated.

## **Carers**

Carers are welcome to come to hospital to support patients' health and social needs. A familiar carer or supporter is not considered a visitor. We can provide carers with a carers' passport so that each patient's main carer can be identified easily.

## **Accompanying someone to a hospital appointment or to A&E**

To keep everyone safe, we are advising patients to come to their appointments alone apart from in the following exceptional circumstances:

- where a patient has a regular carer who needs to come to hospital to support their health and social needs – particularly dementia, learning disabilities or autism
- children (anyone under 16) who need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian
- named partner accompanying someone to a maternity appointment or being present for labour and childbirth

## **Safety measures for visitors to hospital**

If you are coming into hospital to visit a friend or family member, or you are accompanying someone to hospital under exceptional circumstances, please:

- wear a face mask at all times within the hospital unless you are exempt. Masks are provided
- use hand sanitiser or wash your hands as you enter the hospital and when entering or leaving wards, clinics and units
- keep two metres apart from others
- follow any one-way route signs

These safety measures apply even if you have had the Covid-19 vaccination.

If you are experiencing any symptoms of Covid-19, please do not come to hospital.

We advise all visitors to take a lateral flow test before coming into hospital. You can order a free supply of lateral flow tests from the government website ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)) or call 119.

## **Virtual visiting**

To make it easier for patients to keep in touch with family and friends, we have upgraded our NHS wi-fi service to allow for video calls and entertainment streaming services free of charge. This has been funded by Imperial Health Charity. To connect to the network, search for 'NHS Wi-fi' on your mobile phone or laptop device and sign up.

With the support of our charity, we are also providing wards with tablet devices for patients to use for virtual visiting. Speak to the staff on your ward for more details.

## **Receive a letter**

If your friends or relatives would like to send you a letter by email that you would like us to print for you, please ask them to email: [imperial.patient.experience@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.patient.experience@nhs.net) clearly marked with your name and the ward.

## **Care packages**

We have made arrangements for your family and friends to be able to drop off personal items to make your hospital stay more comfortable. Speak to your ward staff or visit our website for more information: [www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors)

# What you need to know about your care

## **Our clinical teams**

Each ward has a manager who oversees the clinical teams working in the unit. Our staff work as part of 'multidisciplinary teams' including nurses, midwives, doctors, surgeons, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, dietitians, healthcare assistants, pharmacists, radiographers, trainees, students and many others.

You should expect your ward staff to introduce themselves. The team will include:

- your named nurse – the nurse responsible for your care on a specific shift
- a ward manager – a sister or charge nurse or, sometimes, a matron
- healthcare assistants
- a ward host – a non-clinical member of staff who is responsible for the distribution of menus, food and drinks

During Covid-19, some staff have moved from their usual role or area to work in other roles or areas where they are needed. They will all have the training and skills needed for the work they have been asked to do but they may be less familiar with the environment. We have also created two new roles that will be deployed if and when we become very busy.

The first of these are 'ward helpers', non-clinical staff providing general help and support, including checking that patients have what they need.

The second are 'bed buddies', who are healthcare assistants and other staff with clinical experience who are providing one-to-one care for patients in intensive care units under the supervision of specialist nurses.

### **Four important questions to know about your care**

There are four key questions that we need to make sure you always have the answers to:

1. why am I in hospital?
2. what's happening today? (for example, 'I'm having a scan' or 'I'm going to be reviewed by an occupational therapist')
3. when am I leaving hospital?
4. what needs to happen before I can leave hospital?

If you don't know the answer to any of these questions, please ask a doctor at the ward round or a nurse on your ward.

The care plan for each patient is reviewed daily by a multidisciplinary team. They review your treatment and progress and will make decisions with you about your care to help your recovery and get you home.

### **A consultant will lead your care**

You will be under the care of a consultant and their team of doctors or surgeons. Your care may also need input from specialist clinicians working in other teams, such as a doctor who specialises in pain control. The ward manager or the nurse or doctor looking after you can answer any questions you may have or direct you to the right person.



Speak to a member of staff if you are worried or if you have any specific needs. They are there to help you with your recovery and will support you in any way that they can.

## **Planning your return home**

When you no longer need acute or specialist treatment, you are considered to be 'medically fit' and you are ready to leave hospital; this is known as being 'discharged'. You may still need considerable rehabilitation or daily support but this will generally be better provided at home or in a community hospital, nursing or care home.

We start putting things in place for your return home as soon as you are admitted so we can ensure all plans are in place and avoid any delays. We will involve you and, if you wish, your family or carers in these discussions. We will tell you as early as possible the date that we expect you will go home. Sometimes this date may need to change because of your condition or treatment. We will keep you up-to-date with any changes.

## **Taking part in clinical research**

With our close links to Imperial College London, many of our clinicians are involved in research. This helps us to develop and offer new and better diagnostics and treatments. There are already several trials and studies underway relating to Covid-19.

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. Please ask staff for more information or visit:

[www.imperial.nhs.uk/research](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/research)

# Getting better and staying well

## Eating and drinking

Eating well and drinking enough will help you stay as well as possible and to feel better more quickly. This is particularly important if you have Covid-19 as you may feel very tired and weak. Please tell the ward staff if you are ever hungry or thirsty.

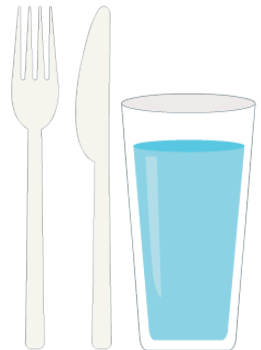
### *Food choices*

Medications may change the taste of food or make you feel nauseated (sick) or you may find it difficult to swallow. If you don't have much of an appetite, try eating little and often and, if you miss a meal, we will order a replacement for you.

Our standard menu has a range of choices, including at least one vegetarian option. You should have a menu at your bedside and, each morning, the ward host will ask you which meals you would like for that day.

You can also ask for special menus:

- for cultural needs, such as halal or kosher
- for specific dietary needs, such as gluten free
- with large print



The ward host can also help answer any questions about the menu. Your health condition or treatment may also affect what you can eat and drink. One of the multidisciplinary team members will explain to you what you can and can't eat/drink and why.

One of our dietitians may also come to talk to you about your diet in hospital and when you are home.

A range of drinks and snacks are available between meals and before bed. Drinks include hot drinks such as tea and coffee and cold drinks such as milk and squash. Snacks include biscuits, cakes, fresh fruit, cheese, crackers and yoghurt.

If you are not eating and drinking well, nursing staff can make build-up milkshakes and soups (called Meritene®) for you.

### *Hydration*

We will ensure that you always have fresh drinking water at your bedside. If you run out of water, please ask the ward host or your nurse for more.

We will offer you seven hot drinks as well as cold drinks throughout the day. If you need more, please ask.

### *Help with eating and drinking*

We will give you notice that meal time service is beginning so that you can use the bathroom and prepare for your meal. Let a member of staff know if you need help with going to the bathroom.

We can also help you with your meal, for example, by opening any packaging and supporting you to eat. We use red trays to let staff know a patient needs help with eating or that the amount of food they eat needs to be recorded. You can ask for a red tray or for help with eating at any time. Try to sit out of bed and in a chair for all your meals as this helps improve digestion and reduces the risk of food going down the wrong way. Please tell us if you need help getting out of bed.

Please let us know if you usually receive help from a carer at meal times, so we can help you with your meals.

## **Staying active**

Getting up and moving is important. It helps maintain muscle strength and fitness and for you to remain as independent as possible. It also helps with your breathing by allowing you to use more of your lung capacity. If you feel strong enough you should try to stand up and walk. Speak to a member of staff if you need help and you should only attempt to stand up and walk if you are feeling strong enough. If you do not feel strong enough, try to do exercises in the chair or bed. If you have Covid-19 and you would like more information on the chair or bed exercises, breathing exercises, or permission to walk around the ward, please speak to a nurse.

### *How we can help*

We are here to help get you moving safely and doing the things you usually do. We will do this by:

- looking at what you were able to do before you came into hospital to make sure we understand how best to support and encourage you to keep moving. This includes assessing your risk of falling to ensure prevention plans are put in place
- completing a full assessment with you so that we know how you normally get about
- reviewing if there is anything that might stop you from being able to get out of bed
- providing you with walking aids where necessary

### *How you can get active*

There are some simple things that you can do to help you be as active as possible during your stay:

- if you feel able to, try to do the things you usually do at home, such as bathing

- if you need glasses or hearing aids, make sure you know where they are and if you don't, speak to your ward team
- if possible, do simple leg and ankle exercises – you can do these from your bed or chair
- if possible, sit out of bed for meals
- if possible, walk around the ward when safe to do so or to use the bathroom and toilet. Use your usual walking aids or let us know if you need help. If you have Covid-19, please check with your nurse that you are allowed to walk around the ward
- keep changing your position even if you are in a bed or chair

### **Getting a good night's sleep**

Sleep and rest supports healing and recovery. Being in hospital can make sleeping difficult because of different noises and interruptions disturbing you at night.

#### *Reducing noise and light at night*

We will make sure we play our part at night by lowering the ward lights and limiting unwanted sounds such as telephones and monitor alarms, talking quietly and only disturbing you if really necessary.

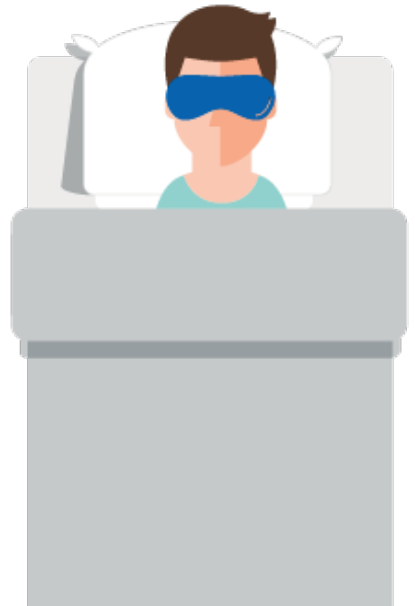
To reduce noise on the ward during the night, we also ask you to:

- talk quietly and be mindful of others who are trying to sleep
- switch your mobile phone to silent
- make or receive any calls away from the bedside if possible, or speak quietly and keep the conversation as short as possible
- use headphones if listening to music or watching a film
- use the call bell if you need to speak to staff, for example, for help going to the toilet or to get something from your locker

## *Encouraging sleep*

There are some simple things you can do to make sure you get a good night's sleep:

- avoid drinks that contain caffeine – caffeine is a stimulant so will be more likely to keep you awake; we have decaffeinated coffee, Horlicks® and hot chocolate available; milky drinks also help with sleep and relaxation
- use the toilet before you settle down for the night
- make sure you are comfortable – ask for help if you need it or, if you're cold, ask for an extra blanket. Also, let us know if you are in pain so we can give you more effective pain relief
- we can give you an eye mask or ear plugs if you are having trouble sleeping, so ask a member of staff if you would like them
- to relax before going to sleep consider the following relaxation activities:
  - deep breathing exercises
  - listen to soothing music
  - reading for pleasure
- if you can't get your mind off your worries, make a list of these and identify how you can address them. For example, you can ask your doctor about a symptom or speak to a friend or family member. Tell yourself you will do this the following day



Please talk to us if you have any worries or concerns that are keeping you awake.

If you need more support, we can arrange it for you so please don't be afraid to ask.

## **Looking after your emotional wellbeing**

Serious illnesses can be distressing for patients and for their friends and relatives. Covid-19 is creating additional stress and concern for many. Understanding the normal responses to a stressful experience can help make sense of what you are going through. This may be during the illness or in the days, weeks or even months after.

Some of the normal physical and emotional responses might include:

- feeling vulnerable, emotional or on edge
- intrusive thoughts or flashbacks
- disrupted sleep
- avoiding things you previously enjoyed
- loss of appetite or 'comfort eating'
- headaches or muscular tension

While we each manage things in our own way, there are some things that most people will find helpful:

- talk about what has happened – you are less likely to experience lasting effects if you can talk about what has happened
- spend time with people you trust – this may need to be via telephone or video while visiting restrictions are in place but it is still important and possible
- be gentle with yourself – understand it could take time to recover
- take care of yourself – get enough sleep and eat well; avoid drugs and alcohol – they can numb feelings but may prevent you coming to terms with what has happened

For tips on supporting mental wellbeing during Covid-19 as well as links to NHS approved sites, visit Every Mind Matters:  
[www.nhs.uk/oneyou](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou)

## Planning for leaving hospital

### **When is it ok to leave hospital?**

When you no longer need treatment at our hospital, your discharge plan will be put in place so you can go home. You may still need considerable rehabilitation or support to help with daily living but this will generally be better provided at home or possibly in a community hospital, nursing home or care home.

Once you are able to continue your recovery at home, a member of staff will work with you to plan what is going to happen next and provide you with supporting information.

### **Think about going home while you're in hospital**

Leaving hospital is a positive step but it is normal for you to take time to recover and get back to your normal routine. By thinking through your daily routine, you may be able to identify potential problems early – this will help us plan for the care you need at home. A smooth discharge is about making sure you have the support and help you need. Setting small goals in your daily routine, which can be as simple as making a drink or snack for yourself, can remind you that you are improving.

Here are some things to think about:

- do you have stairs in your home? If so, can you easily use them?
- will you be able to manage the journey from, for example, the bedroom to the toilet or from the kitchen to the living room?



- will you be able to get in and out of bed?
- will you be able to get in and out of the bath alone? If you have a shower, will it be safe for you to use?
- will you be able to dress yourself?
- will you need help with your medication when at home?
- are you registered with a GP?
- do you care for someone you live with? If so, will you still be able to care for them? If you have concerns about this, please tell us as early as possible so we can discuss care arrangements
- when will you be able to go back to work? Talk to your hospital doctor about when you can return to work. If you need a medical certificate, the doctor looking after you will be able to arrange this for you

### **Getting ready to leave hospital to go home**

Most patients can return home after their hospital stay without needing lots of additional support in place. Once you have an expected date for discharge, please make arrangements to travel home.

You may need help getting home. If you have a relative or friend who can collect you from hospital, you should arrange this with them ahead of your discharge date. Patients with certain conditions or needs will be able to use hospital transport – please ask your ward staff if you think you might qualify for this.

If possible, ask your family or friends to help make it easier to go back home by:

- bringing in clothes and shoes for you
- stocking your fridge and cupboards with essential items
- putting the heating on, if needed

- making sure you have your house keys
- making sure you have enough money for the first few days

It is also important that, where possible, your family or friends are able to support you on the day you go home.

Please try to keep two metres distance from others. We know this might not be possible in some situations.

### **Leaving hospital but you need extra support**

Please let the ward team know as soon as possible if you can see any problems with returning home and what extra support you think you might need.

Your clinical team might also feel that you need to have further care or support after your stay in one of our hospitals – with social care or community healthcare at home or care in a rehabilitation unit, nursing home or care home. You might also need to have special equipment or adaptations for your home to enable you to continue to live there safely.

### **What happens if I'm not well enough to return home?**

We will provide those patients who are moving into a care or nursing home after leaving hospital with information about the next stage of their care.

We can support you to share this information with your relatives via email. Unfortunately, patients will not have a choice of which home they will be discharged to at this time.

This is a temporary measure and the placement can be revised once you have been assessed in the placement following discharge. You will be assessed in the care home by health and social care

professionals with the aim for you to return home where this is possible.

For now, any new or increased care and support services arranged as part of your discharge will be funded by the NHS and therefore are not subject to financial assessment for a contribution by your local authority. However, should you require on-going care and support from adult social care, once the NHS funding has ended, the local authority will carry out a financial assessment for any contribution you need to make towards that care.

### **Our discharge teams support patients who need support to leave hospital**

We have discharge teams covering each of our five hospitals, available seven days a week to help patients with complex needs. Otherwise, your ward team can help you understand your options.

### **Support at home**

#### *The British Red Cross*

The British Red Cross offers a service to support vulnerable people living in Hammersmith & Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster when they leave hospital. They provide a range of services including shopping, collecting prescriptions and signposting. Talk to your ward manager if you think this service would help you.

#### *Social care and community health support at home*

A social worker or care manager will generally carry out an assessment of your needs either in hospital or as soon as you are discharged from hospital.

Ward staff or the discharge team will work with social services or local community health services to help put arrangements in place for when you leave hospital.

If you need support from district nurses, therapists or specialist diabetic teams at home you will need to be registered with a GP.

### *Home First and discharge to assess*

These are community services that allow you to leave hospital as soon as you are well enough and to have your discharge assessment carried out at home. We want to make sure that you only spend as much time in hospital as necessary.

A member of the community care team will assess you at home within two hours of leaving hospital to make sure you have the right support to help you recover. They will talk to you and see if you have any additional needs and ensure you are fully supported in carrying out daily activities such as washing, dressing and preparing meals.

The kind of support you could be offered includes:

- equipment to help you at home
- regular visits from a home care worker, if required, to help build your confidence in doing things for yourself
- a goal and plan for your care and recovery

How long you receive support depends on your needs.

You will be reviewed a few days after you get home and, if you need on-going support, we will refer you to follow-up services in the community.

### *Discharge to a community hospital*

Following assessment, you may be discharged from one of our hospitals to a community hospital. Community hospitals are focused on helping people who no longer need acute or specialist healthcare but who still need full-time care to continue their recovery or rehabilitation. This is sometimes called 'step down' care.

### *Discharge to a nursing home or care home*

If we think you need on-going care in a nursing or care home, we will talk to you about why this is the case as well as possible next steps. If this is the route agreed, you will be assessed by a social worker or care manager and offered different options.

We will provide those patients who are moving into a nursing or care home after leaving hospital with information about the next stage of their care. We can support you to share this with your relatives electronically. Unfortunately, patients will not have a choice of care home or nursing home at this time. This is a temporary measure and the placement can be revised once you have been assessed in the placement following discharge. Staff are happy to answer any questions you have about this process.

All patients who are discharged to a nursing or care home will be tested for Covid-19 before they are discharged, unless you have tested positive for Covid-19 in the last 90 days. This includes patients returning to a care home where they previously lived. If your test result is positive for Covid-19 you will either stay in our care, or you may be transferred to another unit, for a period of 14 days of isolation.

After that time, you will no longer be infectious even though you may continue to test positive for up to 90 days. We will let you know if you need a test before leaving hospital. Testing will be done up to

48 hours before the planned discharge date to avoid unnecessary delays.

For more information, ask a member of staff for the information leaflet '*Discharge of Covid-19 patients who live in a residential facility or have external carers*'.

### **The process of leaving hospital – on the day and next steps**

We try to make sure as many hospital discharges as possible take place in the morning, before midday. This means you have the best part of the day to settle into whatever is the next step for you. It also means that we make best use of our inpatient beds by ensuring they are ready for new patients.

There are a few things we need to do to ensure your discharge goes smoothly on the day:

- make sure you have a copy of your on-going care plan, if you need one; if you are being discharged to a nursing home or care home, we will also give them a copy of the plan
- ensure you have all the equipment you need and know how to use it; if you need on-going supplies, you should know where to get them and who to contact if you need help
- give you any medication you need and make sure you know how and when to take it. You will receive at least two weeks' supply of any new medication; your GP will be able to give you prescriptions for further supplies of medication
- give you a copy of your 'discharge summary' and send one to your GP electronically. Your discharge summary will describe the care you've had with us, the results of any tests and any medication you have been prescribed. It will also contain any information about isolation guidelines on leaving hospital if you have improving Covid-19 symptoms or have tested positive for Covid-19, as well as guidance for carers

Please make sure you ask us for any medical certificates you may need, for example, so that you can have time off work to recover, before your day of discharge. You should also know who to contact once you get home if you have any urgent questions or concerns.

We look to get all of these actions sorted out early so that we don't delay your discharge. We also try to make other practical arrangements, such as transport, in good time too.

You will be asked to wear a surgical mask on your journey home from hospital. If you cannot wear a mask, please speak to your clinical team. Your clinical team will tell you about any additional protection that you or anyone involved in your transfer home, including relatives, friends, ambulance staff or taxi drivers may need. This will support your recovery and protect others around you from risk of infection.

### **Discharge for patients with Covid-19**

If you are discharged with symptoms of Covid-19 or have tested positive for Covid-19 we will give you information that is relevant to your current living situation, including self-isolation guidance. It is important that you read and follow this advice as you may still have live Covid-19 in your body after your symptoms have cleared up and you are ready to go home. A member of staff will go through this information with you to help you understand what you need to do when you leave hospital.

### **Emotional support**

After leaving hospital, you may find that you feel down or low at times or have upsetting memories or thoughts about your hospital stay. It is normal to have emotional concerns.

Remind yourself of any coping strategies you have used during difficult times in the past. It can help to talk to someone you trust about these feelings. It might also be helpful to tell your GP or healthcare team about any difficulties you are experiencing.

## Extra help and services

### Wellbeing support

For tips on supporting mental wellbeing during Covid-19 as well as links to NHS approved sites, visit Every Mind Matters:  
[www.nhs.uk/oneyou](http://www.nhs.uk/oneyou)

If you have concerns about your emotional wellbeing you should speak to your GP.

### Carers

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with carers so that they receive the support they need to help our patients. Speak to the nurse in charge if you have, or are, a carer.

### Dementia support

Being in hospital can be difficult for patients with dementia and so we have a dedicated dementia team made up of five specialist nurses who provide additional support, advice, information and bespoke nutritional support for people with dementia and their families.

Anyone can refer an inpatient to the dementia team, including carers, family members or patients themselves. The team is available from 09.00 to 17.00 to provide information, support and advice about the care of people with dementia in our hospitals. Call **079 9054 0358** or email [imperial.dementia@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.dementia@nhs.net)



## **Interpreting and sign language**

If you need an interpreter during your stay, please ask a member of staff on the ward and tell them which language and dialect you need. A video call or telephone interpreter can then be arranged for you.

## **Patients with learning disabilities**

We advise all patients with learning disabilities to bring a carer on the day of your admission to help us understand your needs and preferences. Please also bring your hospital passport if you have one. To contact the learning disability team please email:

[imperial.disability@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.disability@nhs.net)

## **Information in other formats**

If you need information in other formats such as easy read, please email [imperial.accessible.information@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.accessible.information@nhs.net) or ask your nurse to email for you.

## **Extra support at home**

If you did not arrange help from social services before you left hospital but are having trouble managing at home, please contact your local social services department to arrange an assessment of your needs.

## **Care Information Exchange**

The Care Information Exchange is our secure patient web application. You can access it online to view your blood tests, scan results, letters and your appointment dates. It is available to any patient at this Trust. To find out more or to register for an account please visit: [www.imperial.nhs.uk/my-records](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/my-records)

## **Spiritual and pastoral care**

During times of illness, uncertainty and change, many draw deeply from their own faith tradition, whilst others simply want a listening ear. Chaplains work as part of the wider healthcare teams across our hospitals. Our team includes Anglican, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim chaplains. We can also help put you in touch with your own faith leader. The team is available from 09.00 to 17.00, Monday to Friday.

If you would like to arrange for the chaplain to visit you, please speak to a member of the ward team or call the spiritual and pastoral care service directly:

- Charing Cross Hospital:  
**020 3311 1056**
- Hammersmith and Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea hospitals:  
**020 3313 4574**
- St Mary's Hospital:  
**020 3312 1508**

The chaplaincy team also provide a 24/7 emergency service for end of life situations or for people who are experiencing extreme distress. If you feel your need is urgent, please speak to a member of the ward team and they will contact the on-call chaplain.

## **Chapels and prayer rooms**

There are chapels and prayer rooms on each site, available for use by staff, patients who are able to leave their wards, and those visiting patients. They are open during normal working hours for private prayer and reflection. As the prayer rooms and chapels are on the hospital sites, everyone attending must wear a face mask and keep two metres apart from others during acts of worship and private use.

## Chapel services and Jumma Prayers

Please visit our website for a timetable of our chapel services and Jumma Prayers: [www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-and-support](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-and-support)

## Comments, concerns and complaints

If you have any suggestions or comments about your stay, please either speak to a member of ward staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (PALS) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00-16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and are often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, if you wish to make a formal complaint, contact our complaints department:

Complaints department  
Fourth floor, Salton House  
St Mary's Hospital  
Praed Street  
London  
W2 1NY  
Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)  
Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

## Helping us to improve and do more

There are lots of ways you can feedback, stay in touch or get involved. Send an email to [imperial.involvement@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.involvement@nhs.net) and we'll share information on roles, patient groups and events that might interest you. We'll also sign you up to our bi-monthly newsletter that includes news and updates on the Trust to ensure you receive regular information on these opportunities.

There are lots of other ways you can feedback, stay in touch or get involved.

### **Friends and family test**

Overall how was your experience of our service? Let us know by completing our anonymous friends and family test. Your comments will help us to make changes and take immediate action when there is a problem. You can give your feedback using the inpatient form on our website:

[www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/how-we-are-doing/patient-experience](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/how-we-are-doing/patient-experience)

Or you can complete the form on an iPad on the ward – ask a staff member about this.

We will also send you a text message with a link to the survey.

### **Staff 'Make a Difference' awards**

'Make a Difference' is our staff recognition scheme. It rewards the hard work, dedication and achievements of those individuals that go out of their way to exceed your expectations. So if someone has made a difference to you, why not show them!

### *How to make a nomination*

You can nominate a member of staff by:

sending us an email: [imperial.MakeADifference@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.MakeADifference@nhs.net)

sending your nomination by post:

Pay and reward officer  
Department of people and organisational development  
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust  
Fifth floor  
Salton House  
St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

calling us on: **020 3312 7563**

### **Volunteer**

Volunteers are a valued part of our NHS family and play an essential role in helping our hospitals do more.

Many of our volunteers take part to support their local community or to give back to hospital staff after experiencing outstanding care. Others get involved to develop their communication skills, learn about therapy techniques or gain experience in a healthcare environment.

Imperial Health Charity manages volunteering on behalf of the Trust, offering a variety of roles within each of our hospitals. These include helping patients find their way, giving out information and supporting staff and patients on wards.

To find out more about the latest volunteering opportunities in our hospitals, visit Imperial Health Charity's website:

[www.imperialcharity.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.imperialcharity.org.uk/volunteer)

For general volunteer roles, applicants must be at least 18 years old. However, Imperial Health Charity also runs a Youth Volunteering Programme for those aged 16 to 25.

## **Fundraising**

Imperial Health Charity is our dedicated charity. It helps our hospitals do more through grants, arts, volunteering and fundraising. The charity funds major redevelopments, research and medical equipment, as well as helping patients and their families at times of extreme financial difficulty.

In response to Covid-19, Imperial Health Charity is providing additional support to help our hospital staff cope with the extraordinary demands of fighting the virus as well as vulnerable patients who face sudden and unexpected financial difficulties as a result of their hospital stay. To find out more about the Charity's Covid-19 fundraising appeal, please visit:

[www.imperialcharity.org.uk/covid](http://www.imperialcharity.org.uk/covid)

If you would like to make a donation, you can choose where your money is spent. You can donate to a particular hospital, ward or department, or to one of the charity's fundraising campaigns.

You can find out more and make a donation via the charity's website: [www.imperialcharity.org.uk/donate](http://www.imperialcharity.org.uk/donate) or you can contact the charity's fundraising team by calling **020 3640 7766** or email:

[fundraising@imperialcharity.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@imperialcharity.org.uk)



