

Department of Neurosurgery

Pre-operative Assessment Clinic

Information for patients



Before you come in for your operation you will be asked to come to the Pre-operative Assessment Clinic. These clinics are held in the Neuroscience Outpatients Department on Level 3 of the West Wing at the John Radcliffe Hospital.

Please allow 3-4 hours for these appointments, as it can take time to do all the necessary tests and be seen by all the relevant staff. There is parking under and around the West Wing (but this does get very busy), as well as places to buy food and drink.

What is a Pre-operative Assessment Clinic?

These clinics are designed to make sure that you are fit enough to go ahead with your planned operation and the anaesthetic. They help to avoid cancellations on the day of surgery.

During the clinic appointment we will give you information about:

- what to expect when you come into hospital
- the planned operation
- your expected recovery time
- your discharge home.

Who will I see in clinic?

The clinics are run by the Advanced or Specialist Nurse Practitioners. These are experienced Neuroscience nurses who have also had specialist training and education. You may also be seen by a doctor and a consultant anaesthetist. We will arrange this prior to your pre-operative assessment appointment.

What will happen in the clinic?

During the appointment the Nurse Practitioner will ask you about:

- your current symptoms and what medication you are taking
- your past medical history, including previous anaesthetics you have had and any allergies you might have
- your general lifestyle. For example, your occupation, exercise, and whether you smoke.
- plans for going home, who you live with, getting back to work, etc.

Your height, weight and blood pressure will be recorded and you will be examined either by a Nurse Practitioner or a doctor.

Blood samples will be taken for routine tests - the Nurse Practitioner will tell you more about these. We will also take a swab for MRSA screening. All patients are screened for MRSA before coming into hospital (further details about this are on page 4).

We may also carry out an ECG (electrocardiogram). This is a painless test where we apply sticky pads to your chest, arms and legs to record the electrical activity of your heart.

Before you go home you will be given written information to take away with you, as sometimes it can be difficult to remember everything discussed during your clinic appointment. The information booklets contain the number of the Nurse Practitioners, so you can contact them if you need any further information, or if you have any questions or concerns.

You will also be given a 'green' bag to use to bring your medications with you into hospital. The green bag will also contain anti-microbial products, which you will need to use before you come in for surgery, to treat any MRSA bacterium that may be on your body. You will be given an anti-microbial body/hair wash and nasal cream. You may also be given a

mouthwash containing the same anti-microbial ingredient, if you are having a long anaesthetic. These will be discussed with you during the pre-operative appointment and you will be told how to use them.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*).

S. aureus is a common bacterium (germ or bug) from the *Staphylococcus aureus* family. Three in ten people naturally carry *S. aureus* on their skin or in their nose without developing an infection. This is known as being 'colonised' by the bacteria – this is normal and does not need treatment.

MRSA is a particular type of *S. aureus* that has developed resistance to antibiotics, including one called methicillin. 'Resistance' means that it is not killed by the antibiotic.

What is the difference between colonisation and infection with MRSA?

MRSA colonisation means that the bacteria are simply 'sitting on the skin' and are causing no harm. This applies to most people who are found to be 'positive' ('MRSA carriers').

If the bacterium enters the body, through a break in the skin or an open wound, it may cause an MRSA infection. The signs of an MRSA infection could be a fever or pus leaking from a wound. If this happens, we will give you appropriate treatment for the infection.

Some things can make you more likely to get an infection, such as:

- your underlying condition
- the number of times you have been into hospital
- whether you have any open wounds
- how frequently you have used antibiotics.

What is an MRSA screen?

An MRSA screen is a test to find out if you are colonised with the bacterium. Staff in the clinic will explain the screening procedure to you and will take swabs from your nose and any wounds you might have.

Why do I need an MRSA screen?

If we can find out whether you are carrying MRSA on your skin or in your nose before you have an operation (or when you are admitted to hospital), we can then plan your care more effectively. It is helpful to know if you are carrying MRSA, as this affects the antibiotics we would use to prevent or treat infections.

What happens if my swabs are positive?

If you are found to be carrying MRSA do not worry! You are unlikely to suffer any harm or pass it on to anyone else. If you are worried about MRSA please talk to the clinic staff, ward staff, the Infection Control Nurses or your own GP.

If you are positive for the bacterium we will call and give you the results before you are admitted for your surgery. If you are already in hospital, the nurses or one of the medical team will come and talk to you, to explain what will happen next.

Will a positive MRSA result stop me having an operation or other treatments?

No. Your treatments will carry on as normal, as most people who are found to be positive are only colonised with ('carrying') MRSA.

What will the treatment be if I have MRSA?

If you are found to be MRSA positive we will ask you to continue using the antimicrobial body and hair wash and nasal cream for a total of five days. When you come into hospital, you will also be given a single room in the ward, to help prevent the spread of the bacterium to other patients. This will be explained to you when you are admitted to the ward.

Will I be tested more than once for MRSA?

If you need surgery in the future or are readmitted to hospital, you will be re-tested to see if your MRSA is still present.

Further information

For further information about MRSA please contact:

- your GP
- the Pre-Operative Assessment Nurse Practitioners (please see the end of the leaflet for contact details)
- Public Health England

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mrsa-information-for-patients>

What happens after the clinic appointment?

After your appointment, the Nurse Practitioners will check the results of any tests carried out, including the blood tests and MRSA swab. They will contact you if there is anything they need to discuss with you. They will only call if there are results to discuss, including a positive MRSA swab or if further investigations are required.

If there are any concerns about your fitness for surgery or an anaesthetic, we may need you to have further tests or treatment before your surgery can go ahead. These may mean you are referred back to your GP. In some circumstances it may mean that your surgery will have to be delayed.

Once you have been cleared for your operation, if you have not already received a date for your surgery, the waiting list officers will contact you either by post, email or telephone with details of your date of surgery. This will usually be within 3 months of your pre-operative assessment appointment. If you don't hear anything within 3 months of your pre-operative appointment please call the Nurse Practitioners (see the next page for contact details).

How to contact us

If you have any questions you would like to discuss before you come in for your appointment, or after you have left hospital, please contact one of the Nurse Practitioners:

Tel: **01865 234 975**

Please leave a message on the answerphone, including your contact telephone number, and we will call you back.

The Nurse Practitioners are available from 8.00am until 5.00pm, Monday to Thursday and will return your call on the same or the next working day.

For queries about your appointment, please contact the pre-operative administrator:

Tel: **01865 227 862**

(Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 4.00pm)

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALS@ouh.nhs.uk**

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April 2017
Review: April 2020
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