

Coronavirus Infectious Disease (COVID-19)

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a type of virus called a coronavirus. Coronaviruses often cause symptoms like those of the common cold but sometimes they can cause more serious infections. COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the novel coronavirus known as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

How is COVID-19 spread?

COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly through close contact from person to person. When a person with COVID-19 coughs or sneezes, they will produce droplets that may directly contaminate other people, objects or surfaces. If a person without the virus touches these contaminated objects or surfaces and then rubs their nose, mouth or eyes, they may infect themselves. Infected people can spread this virus even if they don't have any symptoms yet.

What are the symptoms?

It is thought that a person can have the virus for up to 14 days before showing any symptoms. This time before symptoms develop is called the incubation period. Most people who catch COVID-19 will have an illness like a bad cold or flu. However, some will have a more severe illness, like pneumonia.

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- Fever
- Coughing
- Shortness of breath
- Loss of sense of smell
- Reduced sense of taste

How should I protect myself and others?

Please take these measures to reduce your risk of catching the infection:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser
- Cough and sneeze in your elbow or in a tissue, NOT into your hand. Dispose of the used tissue immediately in a closed bin and wash your hands with soap and water
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Wear the surgical mask provided to you. You should use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser before putting on the mask. Please wash your hands often and thoroughly while wearing the mask



What if I have symptoms or have been in contact with someone with COVID-19?

If you think you may have symptoms of COVID-19 then please do not visit The London Clinic. Stay at home and self-isolate for 7 days. If your symptoms worsen, please call 111 or visit NHS 111 online. If someone in your household has COVID-19, the entire household including you need to stay in isolation for 14 days, to reduce the risk of passing on the infection.

Please contact your Consultant to arrange the next steps forward. A decision can then be made based on the urgency of your planned admission/procedure. It may cause a delay in your surgery, though in most cases it will be much safer to rule out coronavirus than to go ahead when you may have it.

What is The London Clinic doing to protect surgical patients during the COVID-19 pandemic?

We have been hard at work to plan and prepare our services so that the care of patients requiring surgery under anaesthetic is as safe as possible during this time. The London Clinic is doing everything to ensure that the risk of you getting an infection is as low as possible. Some measures we have put in place include:

- Ensuring staff are well trained in how to limit the spread of infection in hospital
- Arranging for all patients coming to hospital to be tested for coronavirus, and for those who have tested positive to be cared for in separate areas
- Carrying out regular deep cleaning of wards, operating theatres and equipment
- Ensuring staff use necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) where there is a significant risk of infection, and that there are adequate stocks of PPE
- Ensuring the right levels of staffing and equipment are in place so that surgery can take place safely
- Ensuring as many staff as possible at The London Clinic are tested for COVID-19

Unfortunately, it is not possible to completely remove the risk of contracting coronavirus while in hospital. It is also not possible to give patients an estimate of how likely they are to contract it. This information is just not available at the moment.

In the very unlikely event that you are found to have COVID-19 during your stay as an inpatient, we may move you to our dedicated Infectious Diseases Unit until you recover.

You will not be discharged from The London Clinic until you are well enough to leave. This would normally be to your own home or usual place of residence (for example a care home).

Before leaving The London Clinic you may be asked to repeat the swab test to check whether you have COVID-19, even if you have no symptoms.

I am worried about going to hospital during the pandemic. What should I do if I am offered an operation?

If your surgery is urgent (for example for a Cancer that may get worse if there is a delay in treatment), it is likely that going ahead with your surgery will be the most beneficial option for you. However, you may wish to talk to those involved in your care (your Consultant) who can help you to consider your options. You may also want to discuss your choices with your family. If your surgery is less urgent, you may wish to talk to those involved in your care about whether it is the right option for you at that moment. If you are staying with us for a long time, we will test you on a regular basis.



If I am coming into The London Clinic, will I be screened for COVID-19?

Everyone who comes into our hospital for treatment/surgery is individually assessed. You will have a telephone screening and it will be subsequently decided if you need to be tested for COVID-19. To ensure your safety for admission/surgery you will be required to self-isolate for 14 days prior to the day of admission. This is to ensure your risk of catching COVID-19 is minimised. If you are unable to keep to this, it is in your best interest to discuss this with your Consultant.

How will I be tested?

Swabs will be taken from your nose and throat. The specimens will be sent to the laboratory for processing and the results are reported the same day if received in the laboratory before 12pm.

What do I do if I test negative for COVID-19?

If your result is negative, you will be informed to come in for your admission as usual. You will be assigned a colour – green or blue – which indicates the entrance and pathway to use when at The London Clinic. Your pre-assessment nurse will explain this to you further.

What if I test positive?

If you test positive for COVID-19, your Consultant will inform you of the result. If you are well enough, we will ask you to stay at home and self-isolate. If your symptoms get worse you should call NHS 111. For your safety, we will reschedule your procedure for when you have completed your self-isolation period, and are symptom free. This is because some types of surgery carry considerable risks for patients with coronavirus. Following a negative test result, your Consultant will discuss with you when it is safe to return for your treatment/surgery.

What will be different when having an operation during the COVID-19 pandemic?

We have taken a number of actions in The London Clinic to ensure your safety during your visit. Some measures we have put in place include the following:

- Maintaining social distancing and reducing travelling to our hospital. You may be offered online or telephone consultations with your Consultant or the preoperative assessment clinic, rather than be asked to attend appointments in person
- You will be asked to self-isolate at home for 14 days before the operation, along with members of your household if you do not live alone. It is very important that you take this request seriously for your own health, for the health of our staff caring for you and the health of other patients. All other patients coming into the hospital for a planned procedure will have been asked to self-isolate to reduce the risk of contracting the virus for everyone
- The hospital will ask you to take a swab test for COVID-19 before or on admission. If you require a long hospital stay you may also be tested regularly while you are admitted
- Staff caring for you will wear aprons and gloves and a surgical mask, this is called personal protective equipment (PPE). We use this approach for every patient to prevent the spread of infection to you, other patients and staff in the hospital. Full PPE can look alarming as much of the staff member's face is covered by a mask and a visor or goggles. Please do not be intimidated by it and continue to speak to staff and ask questions as you normally would. If you have hearing difficulties and particularly if you rely on lip reading, please make staff aware of this so that they can make changes to how they communicate with you

- We have restricted visitors for all of our patients and reduced the capacity of our waiting areas so that we can adhere to the social distancing rules
- Please observe any signage that we have put up around The London Clinic, including the green and blue pathways



I have an underlying medical condition. Should I tell the hospital staff?

If you have any underlying medical conditions, you should tell your Consultant or your nurse at the pre-assessment clinic or during the telephone screening. This is so they can take this into account when planning your care and assessing your risk. It is important that you control any medical conditions and take your medications regularly.

Can I have visitors if I'm in hospital for a procedure during the pandemic?

In order to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, we have taken the decision to discourage and limit visitors for all of our patients. Special arrangements for extenuating circumstances can be made via the Matron's Office. If visitors are granted access to the hospital, they will be asked to wear PPE and adhere to our measures like other patients and staff.

Where will I recover after my operation and how long will it be before I can go home?

This will depend largely on the type of procedure you have, any known medical problems and the surgical care plan that the staff have agreed with you. Some patients can recover on a normal ward, while some may need a stay in the Intensive Care Unit. If you have tested positive for coronavirus you will be cared for in a separate area of the hospital. For some procedures, and if all goes to plan, you will be able to leave hospital on the same day of the operation. You should always follow all of the instructions given to you on your discharge letter.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions or concerns please talk to your doctor or nurse. Alternatively you can contact:

Infection Prevention & Control Department

T: +44 (0) 20 7935 4444

The London Clinic Pre Assessment Unit

2nd Floor, 20 Devonshire Place

T: +44 (0) 20 3219 3347

To find out more about coronavirus from reliable sources:

www.nhs.uk/coronavirus <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>