

CovidSurg | 2020
UK Version | Short Read

Having an operation during COVID-19



NIHR Global Health Research Unit on
Global Surgery

CONTENTS

About this booklet	3
What is COVID-19?	4
How does COVID-19 affect me?	5
How are we keeping you safe?	6,7
✔ Before, during and after surgery	
What can I do to stay safe?	8
✔ Before, during and after surgery	
More information:	9,10
✔ Emergency operations	
✔ Delayed surgery	
✔ Cancellations	
Notes	11

ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

What is this booklet about?

You or a loved one may be planning or waiting for an operation during the COVID-19 pandemic. We understand that this can be a stressful time period, with many uncertainties, and as such you will have many questions regarding your treatment.

In this booklet we will try to help you and your family members understand the risks of having an operation during the pandemic and explain how we can work together to keep you safe.

We are very grateful to our Patient Advisory Group who have helped create this booklet.



*For more information, please visit:
<http://nihrglobalsurgery.org/surgeryduringcovid>*

WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus causes COVID-19 disease. It targets the lungs and often causes a cough or sore throat with a high fever.



Cough



Fever



Breathing difficulties

Most people do not become very unwell. But a few people will become very ill and need to be cared for in hospital. Older people or those with health conditions, e.g. asthma, diabetes or cancer, may suffer even more if they catch the virus.

The virus can spread by droplets of fluid that can travel from one person to another when people breathe and talk. Coughing or sneezing creates even more droplets.



HOW DOES COVID-19 AFFECT ME?

Patients might catch COVID-19 before, during or after their operation.

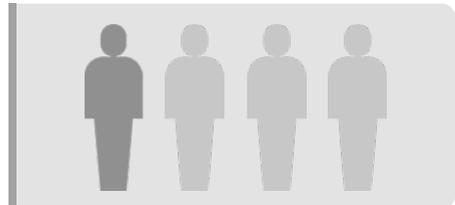
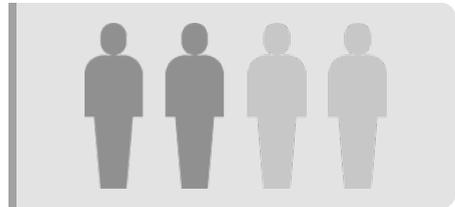
A team of surgeons has been working to collect information from surgical patients worldwide about how they are affected by COVID-19.



Note: Most patients having surgery during the pandemic will not get COVID-19 around the time of their operation.

However, results show that: Patients with COVID-19 are likely to be more unwell after their operation.

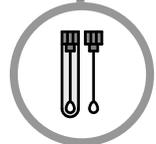
- Half of patients with COVID-19 around the time of operation get serious breathing complications.
- 1 in 4 patients who have an operation and COVID-19 die.



HOW ARE WE KEEPING YOU SAFE?

Before your operation

- Appointments may be online or by phone instead of in hospital.
- Hospital staff will discuss any changes to your care with you.
- You may be tested for COVID-19. This usually means a mouth and nose swab. But might also involve having a scan of your chest. You may need to go to the hospital for this before your operation.
- You may need to self-isolate. This means you should not leave your home. You would not be able to meet friends or family during this time.



During your hospital stay

- Hospital staff will use PPE. This means personal protective equipment, such as face masks, visors and gloves. PPE protects you and hospital staff from the spread of virus particles.



HOW ARE WE KEEPING YOU SAFE?

- › In the operating room, special equipment or techniques may be used. This lowers the risk of virus particle spread.
- › Hospitals will provide safe spaces to care for patients. That could mean a separate hospital or one part of a hospital that is COVID-19 free.



After your operation

- › Hospitals may not allow visitors.
- › You will stay in hospital for as long as needed to recover. The hospital team will discuss your recovery with you.
- › After going home, you may need to self-isolate again until fully recovered.
- › Follow-up care with your doctor may take place online or over the phone. The doctor can check how you are recovering after your operation.



WHAT CAN I DO TO STAY SAFE?

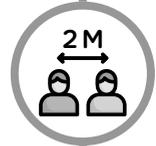
- › Follow the UK government guidelines to stay safe during this pandemic.



- › Wash your hands often.



- › Your medical team will tell you if you should self-isolate or practice social distancing before and after your operation.



- › You may need to wear a mask.



- › Ask your hospital team all the questions you want to know.



- › Letting friends and family know about your situation may help. They may be able to help with shopping and running errands.



MORE INFORMATION

Emergency operations

Some operations cannot be delayed, because the patient would quickly become more unwell. The hospital staff will take care to keep these patients safe.

Delayed Surgery

We need to keep the risk of getting COVID-19 as low as possible to keep patients as safe as possible when they are having an operation.

The hospital team make decisions about which operations can go ahead first.

They will consider:

- How urgent is the operation?
- How many cases of COVID-19 are in the community?
- Are there enough beds and hospital staff available to safely care for the patient?



When patients test positive for COVID-19, their operation will usually be delayed.

MORE INFORMATION

Cancellations

Operations may be delayed or cancelled if:

- › There is a high risk of getting COVID-19 at the hospital.
- › The hospital team need to care for high numbers of COVID-19 patients in a critical condition (this means patients who are very unwell and may die).
- › Breathing equipment, PPE or hospital beds are needed to care for COVID-19 patients as a priority.

Operations will be rearranged as soon as possible when it is safe to do so.



Globally, an estimated **28 million operations** have been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



In the UK we estimate **just over half a million** patients will have their operation postponed due to the pandemic in the first 12 weeks.



For more information, please visit
<http://nihrglobalsurgery.org/surgeryduringcovid>

