

Undergoing breast surgery at Queen Victoria Hospital (QVH) during Covid-19 pandemic

Pre-operative information and advice



This leaflet has been produced to provide you with information about undergoing breast surgery at QVH during the Covid-19 pandemic.

QVH has been designated a Covid-free cancer hub, providing surgery for breast, head and neck and skin cancer patients from across Kent, Surrey and Sussex.

Once you have been referred to QVH for surgery, a member of the breast scheduling team will contact you to discuss the date for surgery and ensure you have been strictly self-isolating for at least 7 days (see chart below for what this means).

You will have undergone a pre-operative assessment at your local hospital which may include tests such as a tracing of your heart (ECG), blood pressure, blood tests and MRSA swabs.

We will obtain copies of this paperwork for review by the Pre-Assessment team at QVH, if necessary; they may contact you by telephone to discuss aspects of your physical or mental health to ensure it is safe for you to proceed with surgery at QVH. If it is deemed necessary for you to have a review by one of the QVH Anaesthetists face-to-face prior to surgery, this will be organised for you. Where possible, we will aim to limit the amount of hospital appointments you have prior to surgery.

In order to maintain a Covid-free site at QVH all patients will be required to follow a strict pathway.



Before the operation

Remove all jewellery and rings before surgery and leave them at home. Any valuables are brought into hospital at your own risk.

For your safety, it is important that you remove all make-up, false eye lashes, hair extensions and finger and toe nail varnish (including nail acrylics/false nails) before surgery. Mascara and false eye lashes can cause corneal (eye) abrasions whilst you are under anaesthetic and foundation/nail polish/false nails can interfere with monitoring. All jewellery including wedding rings and piercings should be removed. In addition, all hair accessories including clips/bands/extensions should be removed as they can result in burns and/or pressure sores.

Although your surgery may be planned as a day-case (meaning you go home on the same day), we would recommend bringing an overnight bag with you in case you are admitted to the ward for discharge home the following day. Please bring a dressing gown and slippers with you as you may be asked to walk into theatres for your operation.

On the day of your operation

Only patients will be permitted to enter the hospital. Your relative/friend who has driven you will have to remain in the car or return home and wait for a phone call from the staff in the Discharge Lounge. There are no facilities onsite to purchase refreshments, so it is recommended that your friend/relative brings refreshments with them. There are toilets available for use.

Once you have undergone checks at the screening hub, a member of staff will direct you to the Main Theatre Reception / Admission Lounge.

In the Admission Lounge, staff will undertake some pre-operative checks such as blood pressure. You will see your surgeon and meet an

anaesthetist. Depending on the type of surgery you are having, you may need to have another blood test.

After your operation

After you have woken up in the Recovery unit, they will ensure your pain is under control and you are not nauseous or vomiting before transferring you to the Discharge Lounge / Ross Tilley Ward; depending on whether you are to be discharged home or spending the night.

Relatives/friends of patients being discharged home the same day will be contacted by the Discharge Lounge staff to advise them that you are going home the same day, if necessary your relative/friend can start driving back to the hospital. They will be advised to wait in the car park until you are ready to go, and then the nursing staff will walk you out to the collection point outside of the Discharge Lounge.

The nursing staff will provide you with something to eat and drink. They will ensure your observations (such as blood pressure) are stable, you are not nauseous/vomiting, you have passed urine and your pain is controlled. They will assist you to get up and dressed in your clothes.

Important information to all surgical patients

Please ensure you seek urgent help and advice from this hospital, your local hospital / A&E / walk-in-centre / urgent treatment centre, GP or NHS 111 immediately if you begin to suffer with any of the following signs of a Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) clot in the leg, or a Pulmonary Embolism (PE) clot in the lung:

- Pain/swelling/heat in your calves (lower legs)
- Difference in leg shape/width from one leg to the other

- Shortness of breath

If you were asked to stop the drug Tamoxifen before having your surgery, please check with your breast care nurse / surgeon for when you should recommence taking this.

For further information on dressings, wound care, drains, follow-up appointments, lymphoedema, and exercises please read the leaflet **“Post-operative information for patients undergoing breast cancer surgery at Queen Victoria Hospital during Covid-19 pandemic”**.

Social Distancing

It is important to continue following the government guidance <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> on social distancing after your surgery particularly as you have recently had surgery and this can stress the body and suppress the immune system, which can take a number of weeks/months to recover. We recommend you continue to strictly self-isolate for 14 days on discharge after surgery.

The government social distancing measures you should follow are:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19). These symptoms include high temperature and/or new and continuous cough
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport when possible
3. Work from home, if possible.
4. Avoid gatherings in public spaces, as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

You should also continue to follow the handwashing/respiratory hygiene guidance displayed on <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> website:

- washing your hands more often - with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitiser when you get home or into work, when you blow your nose, sneeze or cough, eat or handle food
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid close contact with people who have symptoms
- cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a bin and wash your hands
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in the home

Useful contact information

Should you have any questions or need further advice or information please do not hesitate to contact your Breast Care Nurse at your local hospital in the first instance.

Alternatively, you may contact:

Rebecca Spencer & Pam Golton

Macmillan Breast Reconstruction Nurse Specialists at Queen Victoria Hospital

01342 414302 or 01342 414306

Breast Scheduling Team at Queen Victoria Hospital

01342 414383 or 01342 414124

Breast Cancer Care/Now

For information and support about breast cancer

www.breastcancercare.org.uk or 0808 800 6000

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP)

For a directory of counsellors and psychotherapists www.bacp.co.uk

Flat Friends

A charity for women who choose not to have breast reconstruction

www.flatfriends.org.uk or support@flatfriends.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

For advice on cancer, finances, benefits, work and other practical issues

www.macmillan.org.uk or 0808 808 0000

Mind

A helpline and range of publications for people concerned about

their mental/emotional health www.mind.org.uk or 0300 123 3393

Restore

An information and support group for women considering /
undergoing breast reconstruction surgery www.restore-bcr.co.uk

Please ask if you
would like this leaflet
in larger print or an
alternative format.

QVH Macmillan Breast Reconstruction Nurses BCN
Approved Pending approval by the Patient Information Group
Issue 1 - Ref: no. 0089

Print May 2020 – Review May 2021

© Copyright QVH NHS Foundation Trust

www.qvh.nhs.uk