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Health Board

Patient information

Preparing for Your Operation
Get Fitter, Stronger and Ready



Who is this booklet for?

Patients who have unfortunately had their operation delayed as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The news that your operation is delayed will no doubt be upsetting and disappointing. This is not a decision that has been taken lightly. We ask that you use this time to keep as well as possible and to make a positive change to your health and wellbeing. This may be challenging as you might be experiencing pain or discomfort. But we want to assure you that even a few small changes can really have a helpful effect now and after your operation.

If you live in the Swansea Bay area you can call our patient helpline **01792 583700** for help or support during this crisis.

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Acknowledgements: Dr Sian Griffiths, Consultant in Public Health, Cardiff and Vale UHB, Lauren Idowu, Principal Public Health Specialist, Mr Martyn Evans, Consultant Surgeon, Swansea Bay UHB, Angela Hughes, Assistant Director Patient Experience, Cardiff and Vale UHB.

What can I do to help me prepare for my future operation?

You can make changes now that will improve the success of your operation and also improve your long-term health. Patients who lead healthy lifestyles usually recover quicker from their operation and suffer fewer complications.

Leading a healthy lifestyle will:

- Improve the success of your surgery.
- Mean that your operation is more likely to take place, once rescheduled.
- Reduce your recovery time.
- Speed up your discharge from hospital.
- All of the above will help the NHS recover after the pandemic.

Top tips

- Look after your general mood and wellbeing.
- Keep moving and active.
- Eat well.
- Drink enough fluid, especially water.
- Keep within the government guidelines of below 14 units of alcohol per week.
- Stop smoking.





Look after your general mood and wellbeing

Below are 5 simple ways to improve your mood and wellbeing before and after your operation.



[Click here for more information](#)

Connect with people

At a time of social distancing, it is more important than ever to connect with your friends, family and colleagues every day. Talk to someone instead of sending an email or text. Speak to someone new. Spend time really listening to those around you or those on the phone when they tell you about themselves. Put five minutes aside to find out how someone really is.

Be active

We know that regular physical activity lowers rates of depression and anxiety. This will be discussed below in more detail.

Take notice

Take notice of the world around you. Look out of the window and if you are able to sit in your garden or take some outside activity 'take notice' of nature. Try and live in 'the moment' as this can really help. It may help to declutter your house and garden if you are able.



Five Ways to **Wellbeing**



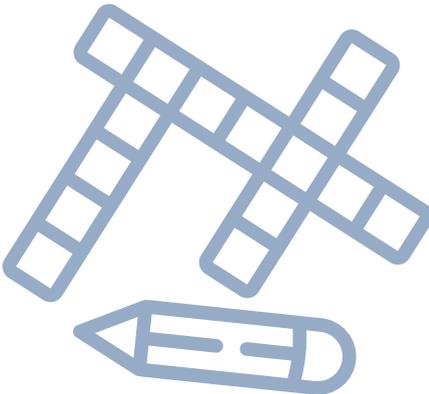
Give

Helping others can help our wellbeing. Try to offer an act of kindness once a week during the pandemic.

Learn

This is a great time to learn new things. Here are a few more ideas:

- Sign up for a new online class or course.
- Start a new hobby.
- Read a book.
- Set up a virtual book club.
- Do a crossword or Sudoku.
- Research something you've always wondered about.



Moving more and being active

Being active has lots of benefits. It will help you to sleep better, maintain a healthy weight, manage your stress levels and improve your energy levels. All of this will improve your quality of life, as well as help to reduce your risk of many illnesses. Being active is especially important if you are waiting for an operation. It helps to strengthen your heart and lungs which in turn will improve your chances of readiness for an operation and having a problem-free recovery.

The coronavirus has changed our daily lives and routines, and you may feel that being active is more difficult. But, there are lots of ways to keep active during these times, whilst making sure you're still safe. Here is advice about being more active:

- Every minute counts!
- If physical activity is new to you, start small and build up gradually.
- Try and build activity into your daily routine.
- Choose an activity you enjoy.
- Some is good, more is better.
- Try to break up your sitting time.
- Make a start today: it's never too late.

Remember, some people can still access outside spaces and parks for the purpose of walking, running or cycling. **HOWEVER**, you must adhere to the government's latest advice and guidelines.



[Click here for more information](#)

Top tips

- If needed use something sturdy and solid for support (for example a kitchen work surface).
- Wear supportive shoes.
- Try not to hold your breath, breathe normally throughout.
- Build up to 3-5 sessions per week of 20-30 minutes aerobic exercise. This can be broken down into smaller 10 minutes sessions if you prefer.
- Try brisk walking, or jogging on the spot or around your garden: cleaning, dancing, gardening or playing with your children can all help. Use of a diary, pedometer or smartphone may help with your motivation.
- In addition to aerobic exercise (exercise as above, that makes you breathless), try to include some strength exercises to help with your balance, again all helping to aid your recovery from your operation.
- Try to build strength on at least two days a week.
- Feeling your muscles work or a slight muscle soreness the next day is normal.
- If you have acute pain anywhere then stop and rest.
- Developing a plan is a great way to make sure you stay active and there are so many resources you can use online:



1. www.sport.wales/beactivewales/
2. https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2020/04/Primary_Prevention_Patient_info_leaflet_2020.pdf
3. www.nhs.uk/conditions/nhs-fitness-studio/
4. www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/easy-low-impact-exercises/

Physical activity for adults

- Benefits health
 - Improves sleep
 - Maintains healthy weight
 - Manages stress
 - Improves quality of life
- Same is good, more is better

- Reduces your chance of
- Type II Diabetes -40%
 - Cardiovascular disease -35%
 - Falls, depression etc. -30%
 - Joint and back pain -25%
 - Cancers (colon and breast) -20%
- Every minute counts

Be active

at least
150
minutes

moderate intensity
per week
increased breathing
able to talk



OR
or a combination of both

at least
75
minutes

vigorous intensity
per week
breathing fast
difficulty talking



to keep muscles, bones and joints strong

Build strength

on at least
2
days a week



Minimise sedentary time

Break up periods of inactivity



For older adults, to reduce the chance of frailty and falls

Improve balance

2 days a week



UK Chief Medical officers Physical Activity Guidelines 2019

Useful resources

[Click here for more information if you are disabled](#)

Eating well

Now more than ever it is important to 'Eat Well'.

This is especially important as you are planning to have an operation in the future. Choosing a wide variety of foods and well balanced meals can help you feel better, stay healthy both now and in the future.

Your operation increases your needs for certain nutrients, they are important to help your body heal and repair itself after surgery. Eating well before and after your operation can also boost your immune system. Below are general healthy eating advice for you to follow.



[For more top tips click here](#)

1. Attempt to have at least 3 meals per day with healthy snacks if your meals are small or if you are underweight. Ideas for healthy snacks include fruit, mixed nuts, apple slices and peanut butter, Greek yoghurt and mixed berries, carrot sticks and hummus, hard boiled eggs.
2. Ensure starchy carbohydrates are included in each meal or snack. Try to include high fibre foods, examples include cereals, bread, potatoes, rice, chapattis and pasta.
3. Have protein at every meal and snack if possible. Aim for 2-3 portions of dairy or alternatives a day. If you are overweight, choose the lower fat choice. Incorporate at least 2 portions of meat, chicken, fish, egg, or meat alternatives a day such as nuts, beans, lentils, pulses, Quorn or tofu.
4. Have at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. These are vital to give you vitamins, minerals and also fibre to help your bowels function normally. One portion is roughly the size of your fist. Fresh, dried, tinned and frozen fruits and vegetables are all good choices.

5. Try to limit high fat and/or high sugar foods to small amounts only. These foods are higher in calories and have limited protein and vitamins and minerals. These include butter, margarine, oil, cream, cakes, biscuits, chocolate and sweets as well as soft drinks.
6. A vitamin D supplement of 10 micrograms per day is recommended if your access to sunlight is reduced such as in Autumn and Winter months or if you need stay indoors for long periods.
7. Drink enough water. Changing your routine might affect when you drink or what fluids you drink - aim for 6-8 glasses at least per day. To prompt you set an alarm or use an app to remind you. The NHS has great information on water, drinks and your health.

 The NHS has great information on water, drinks and your health
 For more information on Vitamin D, click here



*Source: Public Health England in association with the Welsh Government, Food Standards Scotland and the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

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Advice for you if you have a poor or small appetite

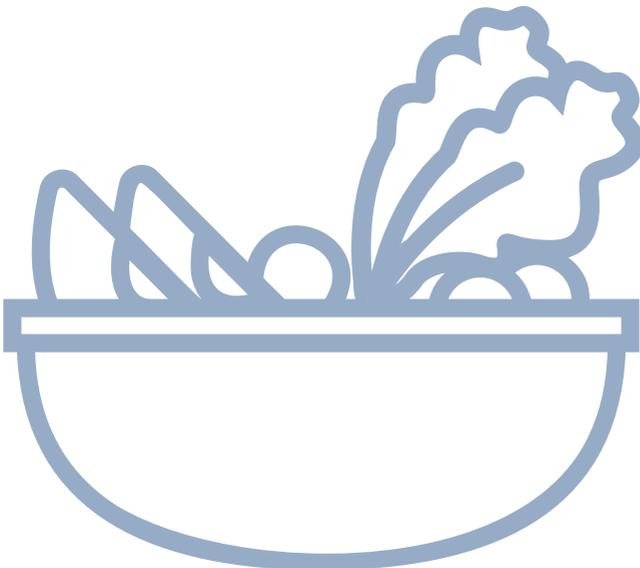
If you have a poor appetite or are struggling to maintain your weight, it is especially important to follow some basic advice.



[Click here for tips if you have a small appetite or you are losing weight](#)

Top tips

- Eat 'little and often' – try a small snack between meals and a dessert after lunch and evening meal.
- Try not to have drinks just before meals to avoid feeling too full to eat.
- Avoid low fat/diet versions of foods and drinks.
- Choose meals that you enjoy.
- Add extra energy and protein to foods and fluid by adding high energy and protein ingredients: cheese to soups, stews and mashes, skimmed milk powder to hot drinks.



Maintaining a healthy weight

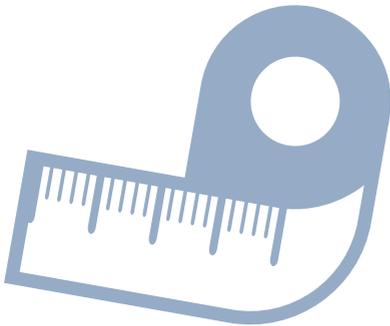
Being overweight or gaining excess weight is likely to make your future operation more difficult for your surgical team and this may slow your recovery. Maintaining a healthy weight can help reduce the stress on your heart and lungs. It can also lower your blood pressure, improve your blood sugar level, reduce pain in your joints, reduce your risk of blood clots after your operation and reduce your risk of wound infections afterwards. This will allow you to resume activity and move more easily and that in turn will speed up your recovery.

Eating well and increasing your physical activity levels can help you lose weight. Usually your GP would be able to signpost you to local support groups and classes but during this pandemic it may be worthwhile using web based support groups to help you.



[Click here for more information from NHS about maintaining a healthy weight](#)

Obesity UK is a registered charity that offers support and advice



Smoking

Stopping smoking is hard, but the good news is that quitting before your operation can reduce your time spent in hospital, by speeding up your recovery. Never has it been more important for you to stop smoking than at this time. It is also really important to quit now in light of Covid-19.

You are four times more likely to quit by using an NHS smoking cessation service than going it alone. Make the change today!

For free advice and support, contact **Help Me Quit!**

[Click here for support](#)

This is a really useful first step or
Freephone **0808 250 6061**



Alcohol



Alcohol can have many effects on the body, but importantly it can reduce the liver's ability to produce the building blocks necessary for healing. Make sure you are drinking within the government guidelines of 14 units or less a week, or lower, to improve your body's ability to heal after surgery.

During times of stress, such as these, it is especially important to maintain a healthy relationship with alcohol. Alcohol Change UK suggests these tips to help keep control of your alcohol intake.



Click here for more information

- Look after your general mental health.
- Work out other ways to relax and treat yourself.
- Find alcohol-free ways to have fun.
- Keep track of your drinking - there is a drink checker here:
<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/alcohol-facts/interactive-tools/check-your-drinking>





Final thought

We hope you and your loved ones find the information in this booklet useful. We understand it is hard to get motivated at a time of restrictions on our daily lives and activities due to coronavirus. We do not know when NHS services will return to normal, but we want to support you to do what you can to help yourself during this time. This is very important as when you do have your operation scheduled in the future, this information will give you and your surgical team the best chance of making your operation successful. Do something positive today, make that change!

Wellbeing and Emotional Support

- www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/LiveWell/LifestyleWellbeing/Emotionalhealth

Age Cymru provides advice and support for older people on a large range of topics, including health and wellbeing, finance and housing.

- www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/#collapse108da
- www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/LiveWell/Stress/

Move More

- www.elderfit.co.uk/
- www.moveitorloseit.co.uk/coronavirus-support-for-older-people-exercise-at-home/
- www.csp.org.uk/system/files/csp_getupandgo_supplement_2016.pdf
- www.sport.wales/beactivewales/
- www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/easy-low-impact-exercises/

Eat Well

- www.bda.uk.com/food-health/food-facts/older-adult-food-facts.html
- www.bda.uk.com/resource/healthy-breakfast.html
- www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/5-a-day-what-counts/
- www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/health-wellbeing/healthy-eating/
- https://www.publichealthnetwork.cymru/files/5915/1308/9930/Tip_Top_Ideas_to_Eat_Well_in_Wales_English_v4.pdf
- www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/LifestyleWellbeing/Healthyeating/
- <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html>

Alcohol

- www.alcoholchange.org.uk

We hope you found this patient information booklet informative and helpful. If you would like to give us feedback on what you thought of the booklet and whether it has prompted you to make any lifestyle changes,

Please click [HERE](#)



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The Patient Experience and Concerns Teams are here to help

If you have an enquiry such as hospital visiting restrictions, or concerns about a relative who has been admitted, we will do our very best to help you.

Please call **01792 583700**

Enquiry line will be open 7 days a week 9am-5pm