

# Waiting for your cardiac surgery

Victoria Ward

## Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net).

## What should I expect after referral for cardiac surgery?

- The average waiting time for transfer is 2 – 4 weeks. This is normal and during your stay we will be doing our best to secure you the earliest date for surgery available. Each case is different and therefore waiting times may vary but please be assured that we will update you as able. At present Derriford Hospital, Plymouth is our first point of referral but we will refer to a variety of care providers in order to ensure a timely transfer so you may be asked to consider surgery out of area. Other providers include Bristol Heart Institute and Hammersmith Hospital, London.
- There are a variety of tests that will need to be conducted in order to ensure fitness for surgery. These will be requested and carried out as part of your stay with the results being shared with the surgery providers. These tests may include lung function, carotid ultrasound scan and dental x-ray. Members of staff will be able to provide you with further information if needed. More information can also be found at back of booklet.
- During your stay with us we would like to make you as comfortable as possible. We actively promote independence for example by enabling self-medication. We encourage patients to dress as normal so please bring day clothes as well as night wear although you will find storage space limited.
- Providing you are clinically stable and you have discussed it with your nurse, you should be able to leave the ward to meet friends for refreshment s in the downstairs café or if fresh air is needed. We will endeavour to make your stay a pleasant one.
- A day room will be provided so that you can read a book, speak with other patients or relatives and spend time away from the bedside. We hope that this will help relieve the anxiety and boredom that may occur during your stay.

## When will my surgery be?

- Once the referral has been made and accepted by the relevant care provider it can take several weeks for the transfer to be made. This is dependent on availability of cardiac surgeons, intensive care beds and transport for example. The ward staff will be checking on a daily basis in order to facilitate the transfer at the earliest opportunity. You will be updated but please ask a member of staff for the latest information. On occasion a surgery date may be cancelled at the last minute, this is understandably upsetting but emergency situations are beyond our control.

## How can I get more information?

- Consultant ward rounds are Monday and Thursday. Family members are encouraged to stay with you if further information is required. During a normal day on the ward there will be a team of doctors and nursing staff that can provide any information needed. We have a supply of cardiac booklets that contain information on heart problems that may be of use.
- If, during your stay, there are any issues you feel need to be raised, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can be accessed on Level 2. Please feel free to ask a member of staff to provide further information if required or see below.
- We have a duty to respect patient confidentiality but with your consent, information can be shared with family members.
- Please ask if you have any worries or concerns; we will always find time to answer your questions.
- The cardiac rehabilitation team can be contacted to provide information on the surgical procedure and what to expect after the surgery. Please ask a member of staff if this would be helpful.
- If family members need advice on accommodation i.e. Heartswell Lodge, Plymouth, once you have a date for transfer, the ward staff can provide telephone numbers of the relevant hospitals. There are also information leaflets available, so please ask.

## Are these feelings normal?

Patient experiences differ. Do you recognise any of these feelings?

- “Very tearful being away from family”
- “Fed up because of length of stay”
- “Know it’s in my best interests but....”
- “Afraid of the unknown”

It is perfectly normal to have these feelings and concerns. Please share your thoughts with ward staff; maybe we can help.

## Transport arrangements

We will arrange transfer to the relevant hospital. However when you are ready to be discharged after surgery, you will be expected to make your own way home if appropriate. It may be wise to discuss this with your family beforehand so that they are aware. Please ask staff at receiving ward if assistance needed with transport.

## What tests will be carried out?

**Spirometry** – This test is undertaken prior to your surgery to help identify any respiratory conditions that you may have, this test involves you fully inhaling, and then inserting a mouthpiece, exhale forcefully and quickly completely emptying your lungs.

**Carotid doppler ultrasound** – This examines the blood flow from the heart to the brain through the carotid artery (major blood vessels in the neck) and is used to help determine if any blockages or narrowing of the carotid arteries (also known as stenosis) are apparent, as this can increase the risks associated with strokes.

**Electro-cardiogram (ECG)** – If you experience any pain or discomfort in the chest whilst you are awaiting your surgery, we may undertake an ECG. This allows us to look at your hearts rhythm, rate and electrical activity and identify any changes in the hearts function.

**Dental review/surgery** – There are two main reasons why you will have this review prior to your surgery. This enables the treatment and prevention of any sources of infection which could possibly relocate to the surgery site by means of the blood stream and could cause serious complications and infections.

**Echo cardiogram** – Otherwise known as Echo, it is a scan that allows clinicians to visualise the structure of your heart and valves, and gain more knowledge on how your heart is functioning.

## Further information

Cardiac Rehabilitation Team, North Devon District Hospital Tel: 01271 341531

Heartswell Lodge, Plymouth Tel: 01752 315900 / 315930

## Useful websites

There are many useful websites that will provide more information including:

British Heart Foundation  
[www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/medical/ask-the-experts/waiting-for-surgery](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/medical/ask-the-experts/waiting-for-surgery)

NHS website  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronary-artery-bypass-graft-cabg/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronary-artery-bypass-graft-cabg/)

## **PALS**

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email [rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net](mailto:rduh.pals-northern@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## **Have your say**

Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

Tell us about your experience of our services. Share your feedback on the Care Opinion website [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

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