

This information sheet has been designed to answer the questions you may have on appointments and procedures and how we are taking steps to protect you from coronavirus (COVID-19). If you have any further questions, please contact the team listed on your appointment letter.

What is coronavirus (COVID-19)?	Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It is caused by a virus called coronavirus.
How is the hospital working to support and protect patients during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?	<p>Our amazing people have responded to the demands of coronavirus (COVID-19) with extraordinary energy, effort, and dedication to our patients.</p> <p>We have transformed the way that we provide care in the last few months to ensure the safety of our patients and our people. More details are included below.</p>
What can I expect from hospital appointments at this time?	<p>More outpatient clinics will be held virtually by technology systems such as 'Attend Anywhere', giving patients and clinicians a direct video link to each other from the comfort of the patient's home.</p> <p>Appointment letters and clinical correspondence will be more accessible by text messages, rather than via letters in the post. Letters will still be sent in the post to those who prefer this method of communication.</p>
If I am asked to attend a face-to-face appointment at the hospital, what can I expect?	<p>All patients will be asked a series of questions to indicate if they have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) and will be given a temperature check on arrival at the hospital. A high temperature is one of the main symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19).</p> <p>We are following all social distancing guidance. This means that waiting room access will be controlled with protective screens at many reception points. Services which have previously been accessed on a 'walk-in' basis will be replaced by more 'appointment based' services, with single appointment times and social distancing in the waiting areas.</p> <p>Staff and patients, where appropriate, across all services will be wearing personal protective equipment (PPE). This will be in line with national guidance, and is to include circumstances where patients will have close contact with healthcare professionals during an appointment, such as physiotherapy sessions or diagnostic tests and scans. You will be given specific advice before your appointment.</p> <p>In addition, healthcare professionals without symptoms will be regularly tested for coronavirus (COVID-19) to ensure safety.</p>



	Any staff member who develops symptoms will continue to follow all guidance to self-isolate. Patients will also be asked to self-isolate before coming into hospital, where appropriate. Your doctor will speak to you about this beforehand if this applies to you.
What can I expect if I am attending for an operation or procedure?	Planned, non-emergency operations and procedures will be carried out at The Rivers Hospital in Sawbridgeworth, St Margaret's Hospital in Epping, and Herts and Essex Hospital in Bishop's Stortford. These locations are separate from The Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow, where emergency care is provided.
Can visitors come to see me at the hospital?	<p>Visiting to our hospital is to remain suspended until further notice.</p> <p>We know how important visitors are to our patients, however, at this time as we manage the demands of coronavirus (COVID-19), we have made the decision to suspend visiting to patients we are currently caring for. The only exceptional circumstances where an immediate family member or carer can visit are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The patient you wish to visit is receiving end-of-life care • You are the birthing partner accompanying a woman in labour • You are a parent or appropriate adult visiting your child • You are supporting someone with a mental health issue, who has dementia, a learning disability or autism, where not being present would cause the patient to be distressed <p>Please contact the ward or department in advance to discuss appropriate arrangements.</p>
How can I keep in touch with my friends and family when I am in hospital?	To keep in touch with your loved ones in hospital, we offer a Message to a Loved One and virtual visiting service. Full details are on our website: www.pah.nhs.uk . For the Message to a Loved One service, you can also call (01279 868128), 10am-12noon, seven days a week.
What will happen after my operation or procedure?	Post-discharge care/follow up and a pre-discharge process is in place to support our patients safely home following treatments. Post discharge advice and support will be provided using our videoconferencing facilities.
If I would like someone to talk to in this difficult time, who can I talk to?	<p>There is a lot of support available for you and your family during this difficult time. Please take a look at the suggested support channels below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind: call 01371 876 641 or visit www.mind.org.uk • Samaritans: available 24/7, call 116 123 or visit https://www.samaritans.org/

