

## Counselling patients prior to referral – additional considerations

Our priority as we re-open the cataract unit is patient safety. We want to share a number of ways we are keeping the process safe; in the hope it will reassure patients but also to help you prepare patients for the additional steps now involved in cataract surgery.

In addition to the usual risks and benefits discussion prior to referral, this information should be helpful when you counsel the patient so they can make an informed decision about whether to proceed with cataract surgery at this time.

### **Self-isolation –**

Before their surgery date, patients and anyone in their household will need to self-isolate for 14 days. This is to reduce the risk of them contracting coronavirus and spreading it to staff and patients when they come for surgery. Particularly recognising the risk of asymptomatic spreaders. The isolation will also reduce the risk of their surgery having to be cancelled or rebooked if they become unwell.

Patients should stay at home all the time; they should arrange for someone to bring them food and any medications needed. They should only leave the house to attend any medical appointments, this includes leaving to have their pre surgery swab. Patients may want to talk to those they live with, plus friends and family who may need to help with errands.

### **Pre-Surgery swab –**

All patients will be swabbed before their surgery to check whether they have coronavirus. This will happen 48-72 hours before surgery. Patients will be sent an appointment to have their swab. If the swab is negative (no coronavirus) surgery will go ahead. If the swab is positive (coronavirus detected) the surgery will be postponed. All patients must attend for a swab, without doing so surgery cannot go ahead. There is a testing station set up in Withington Community Hospital.

### **The stages cataract surgery will involve -**

1. Telephone consultation, which will include medical history.
2. Sent appointment for consultation at Withington Community Hospital. They will also be sent a copy of the consent form to read ahead of the appointment.
3. Examination, biometry and consent signing at the Cataract Unit, Withington Community Hospital.
4. Swab appointment to test for coronavirus at Withington Community Hospital.
5. Attend for surgery at Withington Community Hospital
6. Surgery follow up back with referring Optometrist, over the telephone or at Withington Community Hospital

If the patient needs both eyes operating on, they will be listed for the second eye operation after they have been followed up.

### **Attending the hospital for appointments and surgery**

Arrive on time for appointments and surgery; we are carefully staggering patients arriving at the hospital to make sure patients do not come into contact with each other. If patients arrive early, they will be asked to wait outside until it is their appointment time. If patients arrive very late, it may be difficult to accommodate them due to social distancing.

We recommend avoiding public transport if possible, ideally patients are driven to the hospital by car if they can get a lift with a friend or relative. This is to reduce the number of people patients come into contact with.

### **Risk of contracting coronavirus**

We are following all national NHS guidelines and have taken precautions to reduce the risk posed to patients by coronavirus. However, we cannot remove the risk of contracting coronavirus completely whilst the virus continues to circulate among the population.

We want to open our cataract services safely, so patients can undergo the surgery they need to, but we need patients to understand the risk this involves. We also ask patients to help us to open and keep cataract services running safely by following the new steps we have put in place.

