

Keeping Well before your planned surgery or treatment



<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/keeping-well/>



SCAN
ME!



In advance of planned surgery or treatment, it is important to give yourself the best chance to recover well. This booklet has been put together by a variety of health professionals to support you with lots of easy-to-follow tips and information.

In this booklet, you can find information about the following:

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You can pick and choose whichever area(s) you feel will be of most help to you.

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1. Keeping Active

Keeping active and moving our bodies can play a big part in keeping well and healthy. Keeping active can reduce stress and anxiety; improve cognitive function; improve sleep quality; strengthen bones and muscles; reduce risk of various health conditions, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke; and help maintain a healthy weight.



Getting active will look different to everyone. If you are new to exercising, start small and build slowly. For example, you could try going for a walk, taking the stairs instead of lifts or escalators, going for a bike ride with friends and family, or joining a local sports club or weekly exercise class. It is important you exercise in a way that works for you and your capability, making sure that you are minimising risk of injury or hurting yourself.

Some quick tips for getting active are:

- **Start slowly and build up gradually.** Give yourself plenty of time to warm up and cool down with easy walking or gentle stretching.
- **Take breaks if you need to.** Smaller, more frequent activities throughout the day are just as beneficial for you and may make exercising feel more manageable.
- **Get creative.** Try to think of an exercise or movement that you can enjoy and repeat. This could be a dog walk with a friend, a dance class, or whatever form of movement you feel confident and capable to do.
- **Set a goal – no goal is too small.** A small daily commitment to moving more, for example, a 15 minute walk outside can help you stay consistent with a gentle exercise routine.
- **Eat well and stay hydrated.** It's always important to keep on top of your nutrition and stay hydrated, especially when you are getting active. Read more about Eating Well in Section 3.

Use the QR code below to learn more about exercising and where to find other opportunities to get active in your local area.



<https://movebettergwent.nhs.wales/>



2. Stopping Smoking

Stopping smoking before any planned hospital treatment is the best thing you can do for your health. It speeds up your recovery and has many other health benefits, as well as saving you money. Did you know that the average cost for a 20-a-day smoker for one month is £380?

Help Me Quit, the NHS Wales Stop Smoking service, has facts and advice about quitting - including the amazing benefits that will help your body prepare for your operation.



Here are 5 easy steps to help you:

- 1.** Try to quit at least 8 weeks before your surgery and stay smoke free afterwards. This will give you the most benefits.
- 2.** Even quitting one or two days before surgery - and staying smoke free afterwards - reduces the risk of some complications and helps the body heal better and faster post-op.

3. It is really important not to smoke on the day of your surgery. People who continue to smoke are more likely to suffer complications.
4. Smokers are more likely to have post-op chest infections and breathing problems, risk of blood clots and have wounds that heal more slowly than those who have quit.
5. If you are quitting with nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), be sure to let your nurse or doctor know and they will make sure you have what you need during your stay.
6. The Help Me Quit Service is dedicated for people in Wales and you are four times more likely to quit with their help and support.



**You can call them for free on
0800 08502219 or text HMQ to 80818.**



<https://www.helpmequit.wales/>



3. Eating Well

Eating well is something simple we can all do to try and keep ourselves healthy between becoming unwell and receiving treatment. Here are some general tips for eating well:



- **Starchy foods** such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes should make up about a third of our diet. For adults and older children, choose wholegrain or wholemeal varieties where possible.
- **Include fruit and vegetables at each meal**, as well as snacks, aiming for at least 5 portions per day.
- **Aim to consume adequate protein each day.** Examples include pulses (beans, lentils, peas), nuts, Quorn, fish, eggs and meat.
- **Cut down on saturated fat** by reducing intake of cakes, sausages, cream and pies, and by cutting off visible fat from meat. Also try to **reduce foods high in sugar or salt**, such as biscuits, pastries, sugary cereals, and highly-processed foods.

- **Opt for healthier snack options** such as low fat / sugar-free yoghurts, vegetable sticks with hummus or salsa dip, rice cakes with low fat cream cheese, oatcakes, unsalted popcorn or a slice of toasted fruit loaf.
- **Stay hydrated** by drinking 6-8 glasses of water or sugar-free alternatives throughout the day.
- **Look at traffic light labelling on food and drink packaging.** Having mainly green and amber products will help you to have a healthier diet.
- **Aim to have a regular eating pattern where possible.** Monitor your food and drink intake by noting down your meals, snacks and drinks in a diary or by using an app, if you find this helpful.



To learn more about eating well and what this looks like for you, visit our Eating Well – Live Well hub page using the QR code below.



<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/hospitals/staying-well-and-healthy/living-well/eating-well/>



4. Reducing Your Alcohol Intake or Stopping Drinking

Drinking any amount of alcohol increases the risk of a range of illnesses, including breast and bowel cancer. The effects of alcohol on your health and wellbeing will depend on how much you drink and the period of time you drink it over. The less alcohol you drink, the lower the risk to your health.

There is no safe limit, but if you want to keep your health risks low, you should:

- **Drink less than 14 units of alcohol a week.**
- **Spread your drinking over three or more days.**
- **Avoid harmful regular heavy drinking episodes.** The risk to your health increases when you drink any amount of alcohol on a regular basis. The less alcohol you drink, the lower the risk to your health. Drinking too much on any single occasion (a binge) can carry additional risks.

If you're aiming to moderate your drinking, you may like to keep a "drinking diary".

On a daily basis, make a note of:

- All the alcoholic drinks you've had
- What time you had them
- Where you were
- How many units you drank

This will give you a good idea of how much alcohol you're drinking, the situations in which you drink, and how you could start to cut down.

**To check your drinking levels and learn more about reducing your alcohol intake, use the QR code below
(Get help now | Alcohol Change UK)**



<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/help-and-support/get-help-now>



5. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Waiting for surgery or treatment can be a difficult and distressing time. Symptoms that affect your body can also affect your mental wellbeing. It's important to recognise how you are feeling and take steps to reduce stress and anxiety. This will help you before, during and after surgery and can support a good or better recovery.



We recommend exploring the 5 Ways to Wellbeing, which are 5 simple steps you can take daily to support your everyday mental health.

Pum Ffordd at **Les Gwent**



Gwent Five Ways to **Well-being**

The Five Ways to Wellbeing are:

1. Connect. We get positive benefits and good feelings from connecting with people around us.



2. Be active. Being physically active is good for your body and your mind. Being active releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good.



3. Take notice. Pay more attention to the present moment, your thoughts/feelings, your body and the world around you.



4. Keep learning. Learning new skills can improve your mental wellbeing, as well as improving your confidence and self-esteem.



5. Give. Doing something nice for a friend or a stranger is not only good for them, but it is also good for you. Expert studies suggest that being kind to others can help improve your mental wellbeing.



Find out more about how you can use the 5 ways to wellbeing to improve your mental health here:



<https://www.melo.cymru/topic/5-ways-to-wellbeing/>



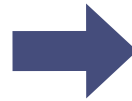
6. Keeping up to date with Essential Health Checks and Immunisations

Health Screening

Are you up to date with your screening?

- Screening allows for the early detection and treatment of potential health problems. Taking part in NHS screening could be the best choice you make for your health.
- The main adult health screening programmes in Wales are Bowel, Cervical, Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm and Breast.
- If you are concerned about changes to your health, do not wait for your screening appointment - talk to your GP now.

Find out more about health screening in Wales



Immunisations

Are you up to date with your immunisations?

- Immunisations are a safe and effective way to protect you, your family and the community from becoming seriously unwell. Vaccines can save lives.
- It's best to have vaccines when invited, but it is never too late to catch up on most immunisations.
- If you are unsure whether you or your child have received all routine vaccines (offered for free via the NHS), please ask your GP or practice nurse to check for you.



Find out more about immunisations here





7. Lifestyle Changes and Coping with Pain

Changes to your health can result in changes to your lifestyle and being in pain can seriously affect your quality of life. Medication may provide short-term relief, but there are other ways to manage pain. Contact your GP if you're struggling - they may be able to refer you for complementary therapy, such as acupuncture or a pain clinic.

You could also speak to the hospital team who are treating you for advice about how to manage your pain. They may be able to refer you to an occupational therapy or physiotherapy service.

Some quick tips for managing pain include:

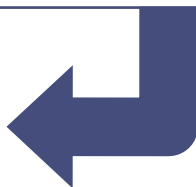
- **Try out a breathwork exercise** – breathe slowly and deeply to feel more in control and keep you relaxed.
- **Shift your attention on to something else** so the pain is not the only thing on your mind. Get stuck into an activity that you enjoy or find stimulating.



- **Talk to someone** – sharing your thoughts around your pain with someone else may help lift the burden of coping alone.
- **Get a good night's sleep** – sleep deprivation can make pain worse or more uncomfortable.
- **Try gentle exercise if you are able** – exercise is a great natural pain reliever.
- **Relax and keep positive** – there are many relaxation techniques you can try, from breathing exercises, to mindfulness and meditation.

If pain and mobility problems mean you're struggling with daily tasks, like washing and dressing, or they affect how you're able to move around your home, you could ask your local council to organise a Care Needs Assessment or an Occupational Therapy assessment.

Use the QR code below to access more information on adapting your lifestyle and coping with pain when unwell or recovering from illness.



<https://abuhb.nhs.wales/keeping-well/>

8. How to Get Further Support

If your symptoms change or get worse, it's important to tell us.

Contact a GP if:

- You have not had your first appointment with the department at the hospital.
- Your GP has referred you for a diagnostic test, such as a scan or x-ray.

Contact the hospital team caring for you if:

- You're waiting for a follow-up appointment, after being seen by someone at our hospitals.
- Someone at our hospitals has referred you for a diagnostic test, such as a scan or x-ray.
- You're waiting for surgery or an outpatient procedure.
- You no longer need or want to have treatment.

Call 999 if:

- Your life or someone else's is in immediate danger.
- You suspect you are having a heart attack (chest pain, pressure, heaviness, tightness or squeezing across the chest).
- You are having a stroke (face dropping on one side, cannot hold both arms up, difficulty speaking).
- You experience sudden confusion (delirium, or cannot be sure of own name or age).
- You have severe difficulty breathing.
- You experience heavy bleeding (spraying, pouring or enough to make a puddle).
- You experience a severe injury (e.g. serious accident or serious assault). Less serious injuries (e.g. broken or sprained limbs, wounds or minor burns) can be seen at a Minor Injury Unit.
- You have a seizure (shaking or jerking because of a fit, or unconscious, cannot be woken up).
- You experience sudden, rapid swelling of the lips, mouth, throat or tongue.

Your doctor and hospital team will advise you on any additional symptoms or concerns to look out for related to your condition.

For any further queries or questions, please speak to the hospital team responsible for your care.

In your area

Our Integrated Wellbeing Networks are here across Gwent to help connect you to what's going on across your local community. Scan the QR code to find out what's going on near you to support your mental and physical wellbeing while you wait for your treatment or surgery.



<https://bgjnthistogether.co.uk/>

CWTSH



<https://cwtsh.wales/>



monmouthshire
sir fynwy



<https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/community-hubs-and-libraries/>



CYSYLLTU
Torfaen
CONNECT
Torfaen



<https://connecttorfaen.org.uk/>

casnewydd
eich lles



your newport
your wellbeing



<https://www.yournewport.co.uk/>