

Hiatus hernia repair and surgery for heartburn

Introduction

We know that you are currently experiencing a long wait for your hiatal hernia repair or operation for heartburn and that this can be very difficult.

We have developed this advice and information to help support you whilst you wait. It is designed to help you manage your symptoms and condition and to prevent these from getting worse. It is also to help you prepare for your surgery.

This guide has been written by the national experts in hiatal hernia and heart burn surgery and draws on the latest evidence and advice about how best to support people waiting for your procedure.

You can download and print this support guide and share with your family, friends and carers.

Guidance for Patients

Your surgeon has recommended that you have a hiatal hernia repair or an operation for heartburn (called a fundoplication). This is the most effective treatment for your condition, but there are ways of managing your symptoms while you wait for surgery.

Stopping smoking will reduce the amount of acid made by the stomach and can improve symptoms of heartburn.

Eating smaller, more frequent meals will help to control symptoms of heart burn. Sleeping with an extra pillow may also help to improve symptoms.

Getting ready for your operation

It is important while you are waiting for surgery that you keep as fit and healthy as you can. This will improve the success of surgery and reduce the chance that your operation is cancelled. Maintaining a balanced diet and a healthy weight can also help. The NHS lose weight resource also has lots of support available including a free 12-week weight loss plan.

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your general health, and it will also help you recover better from your operations, so can drinking less alcohol.

Exercise is important for health and if you can be more active then this can reduce the risks of surgery. Try to take a walk for at least 30 mins three times a week.

If you have diabetes, you need to take care to keep your blood sugar levels under control. If you are struggling, then please contact your practice nurse or diabetes nurse specialist for help.

High blood pressure (or hypertension) increases the risks of surgery and is a common reason for cancelling planned operations. If you are over 50, it is good idea to get your blood pressure checked. You get this done at many pharmacies or by your practice nurse. If you are being treated for high blood pressure you should have your blood pressure checked every few months.

If your symptoms have improved while you have been waiting, surgery may no longer be the best option for you. Please contact the surgical team at your hospital to discuss if this is the case.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

For most people, a hiatus hernia is a nuisance and is not dangerous. Rarely the stomach can get twisted inside a hiatus hernia and this may need urgent treatment. If you have lost weight for no reason, are finding it difficult to swallow, are being sick (vomiting) frequently, see blood in your sick or you have pain in your upper tummy then you should seek medical help urgently by calling NHS 111.

Where can I find additional information?

- **NHS quitting smoking support:** www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/
- **Centre for Perioperative Care:** www.cpoc.org.uk/patients
- **NHS drink less support:** www.nhs.uk/better-health/drink-less/
- **NHS lose weight support:** www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/
- **The Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACPGBI) support for patients:** www.acpgbi.org.uk/patients/
- **NHS haemorrhoids information:** www.nhs.uk/piles-haemorrhoids/