

Patient Experience Hints & Tips

What to Take if You're Going into an NHS Hospital (1)

If you're whisked into A&E (and likely to be admitted) you probably won't be able, or have time, to gather this lot together, so you either need to keep a "grab bag" or hope to have a friend who can bring you things later.

The ** items are the most important in an emergency; where possible spares of these should certainly be in your grab bag – but do remember to rotate the medicines!

- ** Toiletries: soap, deodorant, shaving stuff (if relevant), hairbrush, period supplies (if relevant)
- ** Face flannel and towel
- ** Toothbrush & toothpaste
- ** A couple of clean pairs of knickers/briefs
- Mask(s) – especially if you're likely to have x-rays, scans etc. (while Covid-19 persists)
- Night clothes (although at present hospitals seem to prefer you wear their gowns); try to avoid tight waistbands especially if you're having abdominal surgery
- Some light-weight clothes for when you're up & about
- ** (If relevant) glasses or contact lenses; and cleaning supplies
- ** (If relevant) hearing aids (and spare batteries)
- ** Something to read, preferably a book
- ** Mobile phone and charger; headphones if you want to listen to music
- Notebook and pen
- ** A few days supply of your current medication (despite what hospitals say, do NOT take it all as it often never gets returned)
- Small amount of cash and a debit/credit card

Do NOT take valuables, or large amounts of cash

What to Take if You're Going into an NHS Hospital (2)

Experiences of someone having elective knee surgery.

- I would suggest nightdresses (or nightshirts for men) as opposed to pyjamas as they are easier to get on and off. As you won't know how long you will be in take a sufficient supply of nightwear, knickers, etc.
- Slippers but specifically with backs on because one has little control of the operated leg to begin with and one is walking with a Zimmer frame and then crutches.
- A dressing gown and washing equipment. It is easier if the wash bag has handles as it has to be carried from bed to bathroom (and in an NHS hospital you may have a fair distance to walk if your bed is at the far end of the ward).
- Something to read. Not everywhere has WIFI available.

- A small amount of money to buy things like a daily newspaper, fruit juice etc.
 - A mobile phone (and charger) to contact friends or relatives when one is to be discharged.
 - A supply of all your normal drugs.
 - Perhaps a carton of juice and some fruit. I found I drank a lot of juice in the first 24 hours following the operation.
 - Make sure that on discharge if wearing trousers that the legs are wide enough to accommodate the knee dressing – each surgeon has differing views on the size and type of dressing on discharge. Also flat shoes – I was most comfortable wearing lace ups.
 - My major problem was getting the Zimmer frame into my friend's car. She managed it eventually but it was a struggle.
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What to Take if You're Going into a Private Hospital

This will vary, at least to some degree, depending on the hospital, how long you expect to be in and who is able to visit to bring you things. In recent years I've only been an private inpatient at Clementine Churchill Hospital (CCH), so NHS and other private hospitals may have different rules.

- In terms of clothes, CCH is always very warm (most hospitals are), so you may not need a lot.
- Obviously you'll want pyjamas or similar nightwear (I always take boxers and t-shirts and seldom wear the t-shirts). If you're female and having an abdominal operation you may want to take nightdresses (I guess guys could invest in nightshirts) as you may find anything with a waistband uncomfortable.
- If you're in for a while and you will be able to sit out of bed and/or walk around then you'll likely want a dressing gown and maybe some slippers.
- If you're going to be an inpatient for some time you may want some day clothes.
- Towels and liquid hand wash/bath gel are normally provided.
- But you will need to take a face flannel, bar of soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving stuff (if relevant), hairbrush/comb; and if relevant other sanitary requisites.
- Don't forget your glasses/contact lenses and cleaner; and your hearing aids (and spare batteries).
- CCH runs very like an hotel.
- You will have your own room, with TV and phone.
- The TV shows only free-to-air channels (so no sports channels).
- The phone is expensive (like in an hotel).
- You will probably be allowed to use your mobile – although the signal can be very patchy inside the building.
- Similarly you should be able to use the internet on a smartphone, tablet or laptop as CCH provides free guest wifi.
- Don't forget to take chargers for your phone, tablet, laptop or whatever.
- In terms of other "creature comforts" you may wish to take something to read, headphones.
- Do take a notebook and pen so you can note down things you need to do, appointments made, memory joggers for later etc.
- Do not take valuables if avoidable. I only ever take some loose change, £20 and a single credit card (and I've never needed any of them).
- If you will be having an operation, you will have to remove jewellery (except your wedding ring which can be taped over) so best not to take it to start with. You may however want your watch.

- If, like me, you have body piercings they may have to be removed especially if you are having an operation or scans. This will depend on (a) where they are, (b) what they're made of, (c) what you're having done, (d) your surgeon's attitude. Like all piercings they should not be removed unless essential – it may be possible to have them taped over – but if they are removed (for instance because they're metal and you're having scans) it is advisable to have plastic sleepers inserted if possible. You should maybe discuss this with the nurse at your pre-admission assessment.
- The hospital will advise you about taking your regular medicines, or medical appliances, in with you. But if in doubt, ask at the pre-admission assessment.