Nurse led Functional Bowel Clinic

This leaflet is intended to answer some of the questions you may have about your forthcoming appointment with the nurse-led service for managing bowel problems.

Who is the service for?
The service is provided for people who have functional bowel disorders. Having this disorder means that your bowel does not work properly, giving rise to one or more of the following problems:

- Constipation
- Difficulty emptying the bowel
- Needing to rush to the toilet
- Losing control of the bowel
- Pain when going to the toilet
- Abdominal bloating

What will happen when I come to the clinic?
Your first appointment will take about an hour. The clinical nurse specialist will talk to you about your bowel problem, and explain the results of the tests you have had and how they are linked to your symptoms. She will then work with you to develop a management plan to improve your bowel function.

The plan will be devised specifically for you. It can include any of the following elements, depending on your particular needs:

- Dietary changes
- Medication
- Advice on lifestyle changes to improve bowel function
- Exercises for effective emptying, and to strengthen the pelvic floor and/or anal sphincter muscles.
- Biofeedback (monitoring how well you are doing the above exercises using feedback from a nurse).
Subsequent appointments are scheduled every four to six weeks and take around 30 minutes. The nurse will review your progress with you, answer any questions and then modify your plan if this is required.

What are the aims of the plan?
- To improve your symptoms
- To prevent your problems from worsening
- To provide advice and information to help you understand your condition
- To help you acquire practical skills and strategies to cope effectively with your bowel problem
- To prepare you to manage your bowel so that if you later need surgery you can actively contribute to your recovery.

Will the plan improve my condition?
Some people, who are referred to our service do experience an improvement in their symptoms, feel they can manage their problem more effectively and can resume activities that had previously been affected by their bowel problems.

In order to achieve the best results, you will need to follow the agreed plan and put into practice the advice and exercises you have been given. We will give you all the information, exercises and advice you need to put you back in control of your bowel condition and you will then need to continue with these new habits for life. This may seem like hard work, but, most people find that the effort and commitment are worthwhile as their symptoms improve and their bowel no longer controls their life.

A small proportion of people find that, despite their best efforts, they do not benefit from the plan and continue to have bowel problems which disrupt their lives. If this happens to you, the nurse will either refer you back to the consultant in the clinic or to another member of the team who will explain other treatment options to you.
How often will I need to visit the clinic?
Everyone is slightly different as the plan is developed specifically for you. Some of the people who come to us do so just once or twice, but others need about four sessions. The actual number depends on your progress and the improvement in your symptoms.

Do I need to do anything before my first appointment?
You do not need to have any special preparation before you come. You can eat and drink normally, continue with your usual medication and you do not have to have emptied your bowel before you arrive. After your appointment, you can resume your normal day.

Are there any risks in this treatment?
No. You can not come to any harm when you follow your programme plan, although it may take several visits before there is an improvement in your symptoms. The exercises and biofeedback are safe and have no known side effects.

Where will my appointment take place?
The appointment will take place in the Endoscopy Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. When you arrive at the hospital’s main outpatient department follow the signs to Endoscopy. Please report to the Reception staff and then take a seat in the waiting area until you are called by the nurse specialist.

Who will carry out this programme?
The Colorectal Nurse Specialist will plan and work with you throughout your whole programme. If you have any questions either before or after your appointment you can contact the nurse specialist Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm.

Colorectal Nurse Specialist
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Sheriff Hill
Gateshead
Tyne and Wear
NE9 6SX

Tel: 0191 4453150 or 0191 4820000 Bleep 2041
Outside office hours you may leave a message on the answer phone Tel: 0191 4453151 and your call will be returned by the next working day.

This information leaflet is available in larger print if you have a visual impairment. Please use the contact numbers above to request this leaflet.

**Further information**
Bladder and Bowel Foundation
SATRA innovation Park
Rockingham Road
Kettering, Northants NN16 9JH

Helpline: 0845 345 0165
General Enquiries: 01536 533255
Email: info@bladderandbowelfoundation.org
Website: www.bladderandbowelfoundation.org

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**Data Protection**
Any personal information is kept confidential. There may be occasions where your information needs to shared with other care professionals to ensure you receive the best care possible. In order to assist us improve the services available your information may be used for clinical audit, research, teaching and anonymised for National NHS Reviews. Further information is available in the leaflet Disclosure of Confidential Information IL137, via Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust website or the PALS Service.

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**This leaflet can be made available in other languages and formats**