



Covid-19 (Coronavirus) Information Sheet

As you are aware, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, fertility treatments were suspended in order to comply with the Governments guidance on social distancing.

On the 1st May, The Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA) released a statement, allowing clinics to apply for a license to restart treatments. As Covid-19 still poses a significant risk to the population, in order to be able to offer treatments, the clinic has to provide evidence that policies and procedures are introduced to protect patients and staff.

This has changed the amount of work we are able to perform on the unit and the timings in which we perform them. There have been significant changes in hospital policy that also affect how the unit can run. To reduce footfall on the unit, some appointments may now be performed via phone or video call and the number of appointments required during a cycle may be reduced, if appropriate. The main change to maintain social distancing is that, apart from the day of egg collection, only the person having the test, investigation or scan will be allowed entry to the unit. Therefore unfortunately, we cannot allow partners or other accompanying persons to attend appointments

Unfortunately, any patient with a significant medical history of diabetes, high blood pressure or on immunosuppressant medication will not be able to start treatment at this time.

The unit are also looking at treatments and appointments to prioritizing those where, age or medical background may mean their treatment is compromised, if delayed significantly.

Before Your Treatment Cycle

Prior to undergoing any treatment,

- You will be contacted by a member of staff to complete a medical triage questionnaire. Should either partner have symptoms, however mild, treatment will not be able to start until they have subsided.
- Following this you will be sent a Pre-treatment agreement for both partners to sign. This is to confirm you are happy to go ahead with treatment in the current circumstances and are aware, should either partner develop symptoms or the NHS/Hospital status dictates, treatment could be abandoned.
- Dates can then be discussed to commence treatment and appointment will be made for you to attend the unit to collect a prescription, schedule, have your BMI checked and have any bloods, vaginal swabs or semen analysis performed if required.

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Page 1 of 4		DO NOT PHOTOCOPY



Fresh IVF/ICSI Cycle

After 3 weeks of down regulating, you will attend for a pre- treatment scan to ensure you are ready to start stimulation medication. At this scan, if you are ready, several checks will need to be performed to ensure treatment can continue.

- The medical triage questionnaire will be rechecked. Should symptoms have developed, treatment will be abandoned.
- Temperature will be checked at entry to the unit at every appointment. If this shows you have a fever you may be asked to leave the unit and contact 111, or if mid treatment a coronavirus swab will be taken.
- At each appointment the medical triage questionnaire will be repeated. Should either partner develop symptoms between appointments, you are required to contact the unit and inform staff.
- Prior to egg collection a coronavirus test will be performed. This test involves taking a swab of the nose and the back of the throat. Results would be expected within 48-hours. A staff member will contact you with the results and advise on continuation of treatment. Treatment will be suspended if any swabs are reported as positive.
- You will be advised to self-isolate until egg collection.
- Unfortunately, in order to maintain social distancing, partners will no longer be able to observe the egg collection in theatre but will be welcome to remain in recovery.
- Men will be encouraged to produce semen samples at home for diagnostic purposes, however on day of egg collection this is still encourage to be produced on the unit. This will be discussed on an individual basis.
- Should either of you develop symptoms between egg collection and embryo transfer, the transfer should be cancelled, suitable embryos frozen and used at a later date.

Frozen Cycle

When you contact the unit to advise staff of starting your medication, you will be given your first scan appointment.

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Page 2 of 4		DO NOT PHOTOCOPY



- We will inform you that you will be contacted prior to your scan to have the medical triage questionnaire checked. Should symptoms have developed, treatment will be abandoned.
- Temperature will be checked at entry to the unit at every appointment. If this shows you have a fever you may be asked to leave the unit and contact 111, or if mid treatment a coronavirus swab will be taken.
- Once you reach the point of booking your frozen embryo transfer your Coronavirus swab will either be performed on the unit or booked through the hospital drive thru. Results would be expected within 48-hours. A staff member will contact you with the results and advise on continuation of treatment. Treatment will be suspended if any swabs are reported as positive.
- Unfortunately, due to safety measures and in order to maintain social distancing, partners will no longer be able to attend for this procedure.

Donor Insemination / IUI

As with a frozen cycle, the protocol you are following will determine how your treatment will proceed. You will be informed of what to do when you contact the unit on day 1 of your period

- As with all other treatments, a triage questionnaire and temperature check will be completed at every appointment and up to the point of insemination, treatment may be abandoned should symptoms develop.
- A Coronavirus swab will either be performed on the unit at time of scan appointment and results would be expected within 48-hours. A staff member will contact you with the results and advise you on your continuation of treatment. Treatment will be suspended if any swabs are reported as positive. You will be advised to self-isolate from having your swab performed until after your insemination procedure.

In any treatment cycle, swabs will not be repeated unless you develop symptoms. Should you call the unit to advise us of symptoms, or the triage checklist suggests a change we would arrange for swabs to be repeated. If these return a positive result, treatment would then be abandoned.

Appointments

In order to comply with social distancing, staff numbers at any one time will be reduced and unit opening hours lengthened. We ask that you attend any appointments at the promptly and arrive no more than 5 minutes early. Should you arrive too early for your appointment, depending on number of others already attending, you may be asked to wait outside of the unit until your appointment time. Once on the unit please observe any signs or floor markings to minimise any risk to yourselves or staff. Appointments can be rearranged, if necessary but no “drop in” appointments will be allowed. Should you be running late for your appointment, please contact the unit. Dependent upon the unit workload that day, your appointment may need to be rearranged.

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Page 3 of 4		DO NOT PHOTOCOPY



You may wish to avoid using the lifts to avoid being in a confined space with other patients and members of staff. If you do choose to take the stairs please use the stairs next to the lifts as this will bring you up to the entrance of the unit.

The current Government guidance recommends avoiding public transport where possible. Where public transport is used, try to avoid peak times, maintain distance if possible and to wear a face covering. It is important that you wash your hand AFTER removing your facemask. For more information go to <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers>

Personal Protective Equipment

Staff will be wearing PPE during your appointments. The type will depend upon the type of appointment. For all appointments, all staff will wear a surgical mask and if you require a blood test, an apron and gloves will be worn. In certain appointments, eye masks or visors may also be worn.

You are advised to wear your own face covering during your appointment. Hand sanitizer will be available for you to use and a clinical waste bin will also be placed at the exit to the unit.

Counselling

We appreciate the current situation with Covid-19 is stressful for many different reasons and the thought of going through treatment at this time may increase this anxiety. Currently, there is no evidence to suggest Covid-19 causes any complications in pregnancy. However, please do not feel under any pressure to commence treatment at this point. Should you wish to discuss your treatment with the medical team, or feel you need to speak to the counsellor, please contact a member of staff who can arrange for the appointment or referral to be made for you.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your treatment, please feel free to contact a member of the team on 0191 4452768 or via email at ghnt.ivf.unit@nhs.net

Resources

- Latest advice on the symptoms of coronavirus and how to minimise the risk of infection
 - <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Patient advice and moderated-support forums
 - <https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/>
 - <https://all-about-fertility.com>
- Mental Health and wellbeing support and advice
 - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus>
 - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/>

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Page 4 of 4		DO NOT PHOTOCOPY