

Healthier Communities,
Outstanding Care



Sherwood Forest Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Respiratory virtual ward

Information for patients



What is a virtual ward?

You have a respiratory illness and you haven't recovered yet. However, the medical team feel that your condition is stable and you can safely recover at home, provided that you have the right support and monitoring.

The virtual ward means that you can stay in the comfort of your own home and healthcare staff will remotely monitor your condition (more information in the paragraphs below) or visit you at home to deliver treatment until you get better. Monitoring your condition means that if you become unwell, this will be picked up early and you can access treatment in hospital quickly if you need it.

Your healthcare team will talk to you about relevant monitoring devices and will be able to loan you the device(s) from the virtual ward, e.g., a pulse oximeter to measure your blood oxygen level. You can send readings from the device back to the virtual ward staff. If your readings worsen, the team may contact you and they will give you support and advice on what to do next.

Your team will show you how to use the device(s) you have been loaned, how to let them know your readings and how they are going to contact you.

You will need to monitor your symptoms until they improve, and the virtual ward team are happy you are well enough to stop doing this. Paracetamol and regular fluids can help with mild symptoms and most people will feel better within two weeks.

Recovering from your illness

There are some simple steps you can take to keep well and aid your recovery. As these will be different for everyone, you should adjust them according to your symptoms and how you feel:

- Don't avoid activities that make you breathless; you'll get less fit and out of breath more easily. Increase your activities gradually as your condition improves.
- Eating regularly will help you regain strength and aid your recovery. You may find that large meals make your breathing feel more difficult, so eating little and often is advised. If you need further advice on nutrition, please talk to a virtual ward nurse or useful advice can be found on the British Lung Foundation Website www.blf.org.uk/support-for-you/eating-well
- Unless you have been advised to restrict your fluid intake, drink plenty of fluids to keep yourself well hydrated. Being dehydrated can make your sputum/ phlegm/ mucous drier and harder to clear.

- Take your medications as prescribed by your GP, or new medications on your discharge summary. If you take an inhaler, it is important that you have been shown how to use it correctly, otherwise, you will not get the full benefit of the medication. Please speak to the nurse or pharmacy staff before your discharge if you need advice on how to take your inhaler.
- Stopping smoking is one of the most positive lifestyles changes you can make; it will save you money and will help to keep you well for longer. For help or advice, speak to a nurse or doctor or contact <https://yourhealthnotts.co.uk/> or call 0115 772 2515.
- If you live alone, ask a friend, family member or neighbour to check up on you. Additionally, NHS Volunteer Responders can help with things like collecting shopping and medicines. Call 0808 196 3646 (between 8am to 8pm every day) to arrange help from a volunteer.

What should I do if I feel unwell?

You will be given instructions on what to do if you feel unwell, which includes telephoning (and asking for) a member of the virtual ward team between the hours of 8am and 6pm on the number below:

- Sherwood Forest Hospitals: 01623 622515

If you feel unwell outside of these hours, as per the information below, please call 999.

Signs that show that you are probably recovering may include:

- ✓ Gradual improvement
- ✓ Fully mobile, able to manage stairs, not confused
- ✓ Normal eating and drinking
- ✓ Oxygen level (measured with the pulse oximeter) is consistently above
- ✓ Pulse range 50-90 beats per minute
- ✓ No signs of fever (raised temperature).

At higher risk. Call the virtual ward team in hours or out of hours, or for urgent medical attention ring NHS 111 if you have any of the following signs/symptoms or readings:

- ✓ Feeling more unwell
- ✓ Reduced mobility or too weak to get out of bed
- ✓ Not eating or drinking adequately
- ✓ Unable to speak full sentences due to breathlessness
- ✓ Oxygen levels consistently below
- ✓ Heart rate consistently above 90 beats per minute at rest
- ✓ Fever consistently and not responding to cooling down or paracetamol
- ✓ New or worsening swelling to lower limbs
- ✓ Change in colour and consistency and amount of sputum.

Call 999 for an urgent assessment if you have any of the following signs/symptoms or readings:

- ✓ Your health is rapidly worsening over a period of hours
- ✓ Short of breath sitting quietly
- ✓ Your oxygen level is consistently less than meaning more than once within an hour
- ✓ Blue lips or face
- ✓ Pulse over 100 at rest after repeat testing and/or new irregularity
- ✓ Severe or sudden onset of chest pain
- ✓ Cold, clammy or mottled skin
- ✓ Confusion or feeling drowsy, accompanied with tremor/shaking.

Frequently asked questions

How long will I stay on the virtual ward?

The maximum length of stay on the virtual ward is two weeks. If you are still unwell or need on-going treatment, you will be referred to another team who will continue to deliver your care.

Who will be in charge of my care?

A consultant doctor will oversee your care, alongside other health/social care professionals which may include nurses, physiotherapy, dieticians, social care workers, voluntary services etc.

What if I need to be monitored remotely, but don't have Wi-Fi and I am not very comfortable with using technology?

Our technology is designed to work even if Wi-Fi is not available – how this works will be discussed with you. Before you are given any technology to use, the virtual ward team will explain it step by step.

If I need be admitted into hospital, can I be discharged back on the virtual ward?

If you have been on the virtual ward but have to be admitted to hospital for treatment, then, if appropriate, you can be transferred back onto the virtual ward.

What if I don't want to be transferred to and cared for on the virtual ward?

A nurse or doctor will discuss any concerns that you may have. Please be aware that the longer you stay in hospital, the more likely you are to suffer from deconditioning (which means you are less able to do your everyday activities such as washing, dressing, walking etc), loss of independence and hospital acquired infections.



Further information

Our Patient Experience/Advisory/Customer Care teams are available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints and will ensure a prompt and efficient service. Please call or email the relevant team below:

- **Sherwood Forest Hospitals**

Telephone: 01623 672222

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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